

Guidelines on E-Mail Etiquette

Email continues to be a very important and significantly used avenue of communication for us at the Mona Campus. The formality of email can vary from a brief note or reminder, to the communication of significant documentation and information. Although many of us give careful thought to the contents of anything written down on paper, most emails are composed with much less consideration. The offhand remarks and unguarded comments, thoughtless turns of phrase and careless wording can easily create offence or give the wrong impression i.e. lead to mis-communication. Care must be taken both when composing email, and when interpreting it. Irony or humour can be difficult to express in a mail message - many people get around this by using *smileys* such as :) to indicate humour - but not everyone knows what these mean, so they are not fool proof.

Many users send email replies late or not at all, or send replies that do not actually answer the questions asked. This is unprofessional and should not be regarded as acceptable for business communication.

Why do we wish to address rules of etiquette?

Rules are required for the following four reasons:

- Professionalism: by using appropriate language and well-constructed sentences, the sender conveys a professional image.
- Efficiency: email that gets to the point is much more effective than a poorly worded email.
- Protection from liability: user awareness of email risks may lead to avoidance of potential litigation which is in the interest not only of the individual but also of the Organization.
- Sociability: conforming to accepted social norms of cyberspace.

The same rules of good sociable behaviour applying to face-to-face communication or the traditional written communication, apply also to electronic communication.

The following do's and don'ts are from the website www.dynamo.com. They are so relevant to us that we have copied them here.

Etiquette Do's for the email user

Do check to see what the Campus' **email policy** is.
(http://www.uwi.edu/uwipolicies/email_and_messaging_services_policy.pdf)

Do try to think about the message **content** before you send it out.

Do make sure that the content is **relevant** to the recipients and to the context. Nobody likes to receive junk email.

Do be **polite**. Terseness can be misinterpreted.

Do trim any quoted message down as much as possible. The recipient should not be expected to wade through pages of material for the discovery of a single salient point.

Do try to use humour and irony **sparingly**. You can use smileys such as :) or :(to indicate facial expressions, but make sure that the recipient understands what they mean, and use only, in very informal communication.

Do ensure that you have a **relevant** "Subject" line.

Do try to **quote** from the original message where relevant. The receiver may not remember the details of the original discussion. You can break the quoted message down into paragraphs and comment on them individually to make it clearer, or you may use the *Reply* option.

Do be **patient**, especially with inexperienced email users. Give people the benefit of the doubt – not everyone is familiar with email etiquette.

Do include a brief **signature** on your email messages to help the recipient understand who it is from.

Do be **careful** when replying to mailing list messages, or to messages sent to many recipients. Do not reply to the whole list unless it is necessary. People do not want to receive unnecessary mail.

Do remember to **delete** anything that isn't needed or is trivial or belongs to old mail.

Do remember to tell people the format of any **attachments** you send if they're anything other than basic Microsoft Office file types.

Do Be concise and to the point.

Do Take care with abbreviations except where universally accepted, and emoticons (or smilies).

Do Keep your language gender neutral.

Do Avoid using URGENT and IMPORTANT unless the communication really is.

Etiquette Don'ts for the email user

Don't reply to an email message when **angry**, or you may regret it later. Once the message has been sent, you will not be able to recover it.

Don't keep mail on your **server** longer than necessary, especially large attachments.

Don't copy out an **entire, long** message just to add a line or two of text such as "I agree".

Don't type in **CAPITALS** as this is considered to be **SHOUTING**. This is one of the rudest things you can do.

Don't send **irrelevant** messages, **especially** to mailing lists or newsgroups.

Don't send large **attachments** without checking with the recipient first.

Don't send **excessive multiple postings** to people who have no interest. This is known as "spamming" and is considered to be an annoyance.

Don't reply to spam.

Don't send **chain letters** or "make money fast" messages. There are several **hoaxes** having to do with viruses - never pass these on without checking with your IT department first.

Don't criticize people's **spelling**, it is considered petty.

Don't conduct **arguments** in public.

Don't "flame" people by sending them **abusive** email messages.

Don't make **personal remarks** about third parties. Email messages can come back to haunt you.

Don't send **unsuitable** email or attachments, especially anything of a sexual nature. They may well be found by a third party later.

Don't use an **over-elaborate** signature on your email message. Never, ever, use scanned images in a signature as these tend to be very large and may create problems at the receiving end.

Don't mark things as **urgent** if they aren't, because then when you really do have an urgent message it may not be treated in the way it deserves.

Don't request delivery and read receipts. This will almost always annoy your recipient before he or she has even read your message. If you want to know whether an email was received it is better to ask the recipient to let you know if it was received.

Don't use email to discuss confidential information. Sending an email is like sending a postcard. Moreover, never make any libellous, sexist or racially discriminating comments in emails, even if they are meant to be a joke.

Don't use non-standard abbreviations. Except in very informal communication, avoid abbreviations such as BTW (by the way) and LOL (laugh out loud). The recipient might not be aware of the meanings of the abbreviations and they are generally not appropriate.

Don't send or forward emails containing libelous, defamatory, offensive, racist or obscene remarks. If you receive an e-mail of this nature, you must promptly notify your supervisor.

Don't forge or attempt to forge email messages.

Don't send email messages using another person's email account.

Don't copy a message or attachment belonging to another user without permission of the originator.

Don't disguise or attempt to disguise your identity when sending mail.

Don't violate copyright laws by transmitting without credit or permission, someone else's work or thought

Terms

Spam: Spamming is repeated posting of the same message to a particular group to be obnoxious or simply by being thoughtless. This action very often creates flaming (below).

Flame: This is abusive language or expressions. To be flamed means that you have sent an email to a person that has caused that person to respond in not-so-nice words. It is basically a verbal attack conducted electronically.

Emoticon or smileys: Irony or humour can be difficult to express in a mail message, and gestures are impossible - many people get round this by using emoticons which are representative symbols such as a *smiley* :) to indicate humour.

Abbreviations

Abbreviations have become quite rampant with email in the quest to save keystrokes, often trading clarity for confusion. Following are some of the more well-known ones. The advice to email-ers is that they stick to standard abbreviations.

BCNU	Be seeing you
BTW	By the way

FAQ	Frequently asked questions
FWIW	For what it's worth
FYI	For your information
IMPO	In my humble opinion
OBO	Our best offer
ROTFL	Rolling on the floor laughing
RTFM	Read the funny manual
TNSTAAFL	There's no such thing as a free lunch
TTFN	Ta ta for now
TTYL	Talk to you later

Smilies

Recommended that you use these sparingly:

☺	Smiley face
;-)	Wink (light sarcasm)
☹	Indifference
:->	Devilish grin
8-)	Eye-glasses
:-D	Shock or surprise
:-/	Perplexed
☹	Frown (anger or displeasure)
:-P	Wry smile
;-}	Leer
:-Q	Smoker
:-e	Disappointment
:-@	Scream
:-O	Yell
:-*	Drunk
:-{}	Wears lipstick
:-	Male
>-	Female

Note: colon dash right-bracket gives ☺
colon dash | gives ☹
colon dash left-bracket gives ☹

Users

Use of Campus electronic mail services are intended primarily for University students, faculty and staff, for purposes that conform to the requirements of teaching, learning, research, and administrative.

Email accounts: All email accounts maintained on Mona's email systems are the property of the University of the West Indies. Email accounts not used for 60 days may be deactivated by the administrator. The format of UWI Mona's email account address is firstname.lastname@uwimona.edu.jm. Where a duplicate occurs a number is added to the next address, starting at 02 (e.g. Firstname.lastname02@uwimona.edu.jm).

Responsible Use

Email users are expected to:

- Check email on a regular basis
- Change (domain-) password every 60 days
- Take their own backup of important messages and files
- Immediately report to their department heads security breaches detected
- Manage their email accounts by deleting old files, excessively large files, files no longer needed

Restrictions

The Electronic mail services may not be used for:

- unlawful activities;
- commercial purposes not under the auspices of the University;
- personal financial gain except as permitted by the University;
- personal use inconsistent with Campus and University policies;
- uses that violate other University and Campus policies or guidelines. This includes, but is not limited to, policies and guidelines regarding intellectual property, or policies regarding harassment in any form.

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;
- "spam", that is, to exploit mail list servers or similar broadcast to amplify the widespread distribution of unsolicited email;
- "letter-bomb", that is, to resend the same email repeatedly to one or more recipients to interfere with the recipient's use of email;
- deliberately spread viruses or other electronic infection

Representation

Electronic mail users shall not give the impression that they are representing, giving opinions, or otherwise making statements on behalf of the University or any unit of the University unless appropriately authorized (explicitly or implicitly) to do so. Where appropriate, an explicit disclaimer shall be included unless it is clear from the context that the author is not representing the University. {An appropriate disclaimer is: "The opinions or statements expressed herein are my own and should not be taken as a position, opinion, or endorsement of The University of the West Indies."}

Personal Use: Although the University's email system is meant for university business use, the Campus allows the reasonable use of email for personal use if certain guidelines are adhered to:

- Personal use of email should not interfere with work.
- Personal emails must also adhere to the guidelines in this policy.
- Personal emails are advisedly kept in a separate folder, named 'Private'. The emails in this folder must be deleted regularly so as not to clog up the system.
- The forwarding of chain letters, junk mail, jokes and executables is strictly forbidden.
- Users should restrict the number of personal emails sent per day. An average of 2 is the suggested restriction.
- Mass mailing is not allowed.
- All messages distributed via the University's email system, even personal emails, are University property

Security and Confidentiality:

The Campus does not guarantee the confidentiality of electronic mail. Such confidentiality may be compromised by applicability of law or policy, including this Policy, by unintended redistribution, or because of inadequacy of current technologies to protect against unauthorized access. Users, therefore, should exercise extreme caution in using email to communicate confidential or sensitive matters.

Users should be aware that, during the performance of their duties, network and computer operations personnel and system administrators need, from time to time, to observe certain transactional information to ensure proper functioning of the Campus email services, and on these and other occasions may inadvertently see the contents of email messages. They are not permitted to see or read the contents intentionally; to read transactional information where not germane to the technology purpose; or to disclose or otherwise use what they may have seen. Operators of University electronic mail services are expected to follow sound professional practices in providing for the security of electronic mail records, data, application programs, and system programs under their jurisdiction. Since such professional practices and protections are not foolproof, however, the security and confidentiality of electronic mail cannot be guaranteed. Furthermore, operators of email services have no control over the security of email that has been downloaded to a user's computer. The Mona Campus attempts to provide email services which are as secure and reliable as practical and as the technology allows. Users are encouraged to assist in the security of their files by employing good password management and usage practices as described in this document.

Employing Basic Protection:

The following basic practices will go a far way in safe guarding our communication against the typical intruder though they may only deter a professional hacker. This latter group, however, constitutes a small number of high skilled persons who are mostly not interested in intruding on the average message.

- Password management. Change passwords regularly i.e. within the period advised; use passwords that are not easily guessable.
- 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. 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.

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 whom 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.’

Writing Emails

- Write well-structured emails and use short, descriptive subjects. E-mails with no full stops or commas are difficult to read and can sometimes even change the meaning of the text.
- Email style is generally informal so the sentences can be short and to the point. 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 can be ended with ‘Best Regards’. The use of Internet abbreviations and characters such as smileys however, is not encouraged as many people do not know them.

- Signatures must include your name, job title and company name. A disclaimer may be added underneath your signature (see Disclaimer)
- 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.
- If you forward mails, state clearly what action you expect the recipient to take.
- Only send emails of which the content could be displayed on a public notice board. Otherwise use the password and signature protection discussed above.
- 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
- Be careful with formatting. Remember 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. When using colours, use a colour that is easy to read on the background. Don’t be too expansive in formatting.

Replying to emails

Emails should be answered within 24 hours, but users must endeavor to answer within the work day.

Maintenance: Delete any email messages that you do not need to have a copy of, and if possible, set your email client to automatically empty your deleted bin