



**Working Together**

# **Electronic Systems Policy and Procedure**

**November 2016**

## History of Changes

<b>Version</b>	<b>Description of Change</b>	<b>Authored by</b>	<b>Date</b>
1.1	Date changes and title changes	Debbie Kerr	November 2016

## **Electronic Systems Policy**

### **1.0 Introduction**

- 1.1 The use of electronic systems such as e-mail, internet and intranet within the College is encouraged, as its appropriate use facilitates communication and improves efficiency. Its inappropriate use, however, causes many problems, ranging from minor distractions to potential legal claims against both the individual and the College.

### **2.0 Scope**

- 2.1 The purpose of this policy is to ensure the appropriate use of all electronic systems by all staff. This policy and procedure sets out the College's view on the correct use of electronic systems, and explains how this can be achieved, as well as the College's response to inappropriate use.

### **3.0 Key Principles**

#### **3.1 Authorised Use**

The electronic systems are available for communication on matters directly concerned with the business of the College. Members of staff using the systems should give particular attention to the following points.

##### **3.1.1 The Standard of Presentation**

The style and content of a piece of text must be consistent with the standards that the College expects from written communications.

##### **3.1.2 The Extent of Circulation**

Individuals are often swamped with irrelevant information because the senders have not given sufficient thought to who really needs to receive the information. Information should only be sent to those members of staff for whom they are particularly relevant.

### 3.1.3 The Appropriateness of E-mail

E-mail should not be used as a substitute for face-to-face communication. Hasty messages sent without proper consideration, can cause unnecessary misunderstandings with both colleagues and customers. "Flame-mails" - the sending of messages that are abusive or critical - can be a source of stress and damage work relationships. Any individual or organisation that considers E-mail information to be defamatory has the right to take legal action.

### 3.1.4 The Visibility of E-Mail

If the message is confidential, the user must ensure that the necessary steps are taken to protect confidentiality.

### 3.1.5 Personal Use

The College recognises that as with telephone usage there are occasions when a member of staff may wish to use electronic systems for personal purposes. As with telephone usage, this should be kept to a minimum and where possible conducted during meal times or other breaks or outside work hours. Any member of staff found to be abusing the situation as a result of random monitoring will be subject to disciplinary action which could include dismissal.

## 3.2 Unauthorised Use

### 3.2.1 E-Mail Contracts

Offers or contracts transmitted via E-mail are as legally binding on the College as those sent on paper. No contract should therefore be entered into by this means without the prior authorisation of the Financial Controller.

### 3.2.2 The College will not tolerate the use of the systems for any of the following:

- any message that could constitute bullying or harassment (eg on the grounds of a protected characteristic)
- on-line gambling
- accessing pornography

- posting confidential information about other employees, the College, its customers or suppliers. Contractual non-disclosure obligations concerning the College's confidential information still apply when using the internet and E-mail system down loading or distributing copyright information. Any software or files down loaded via the Internet into the College's network become the property of the College and may be used only in ways which are consistent with their licences or copyrights (guidelines on copyright and the internet can be obtained from the Library)
- downloading entertainment soft ware or games or to play games against opponents over the internet
- downloading or distributing pirated software or data
- propagation of any virus, worm, Trojan Horse or trap-door program code

3.3 All existing College policies apply to conduct on electronic systems, especially, but not exclusively, those that deal with intellectual property protection, privacy, misuse of College resources, harassment, equal opportunity, information and data security and confidentiality. Any unauthorised use of electronic systems is likely to result in disciplinary action which may include dismissal.

### **3.4 Freedom of Information and Data Protection**

Email communication is covered by both the Data Protection Act and the Freedom of Information Act.

When a freedom of information (FOI) request is received asking for all correspondence on a subject the College is required to check for emails relating to that subject. Please be aware that anything you write in an email could end up in the public domain following an FOI request. There are exemptions that allow us to refuse to publish, but these are in very limited and for specific circumstances. It is best to assume that information could be shared publically and write your correspondence accordingly.

Information about an individual is protected under the Data Protection Act. This means that any email containing personal information must be sent confidentially and stored securely. An individual can request to see all correspondence relating to them, including emails.

### **3.5 Emails Containing Personal Information**

When writing emails containing personal information care must be taken in selecting a subject title. Avoid using names and other identifying information within the subject heading. If an email is being sent regarding an individual then a general heading for the email should be used rather than the individual's name and the email should be marked confidential.

Be aware that the notify function, when switched on, alerts you to a new email in your inbox. Lecturers using their college account to access the network when using a Smartboard will have their alerts appearing on the Board for the whole class to see. Emails using students names in the title will therefore be seen by the whole class; compromising confidentiality. It is advised to switch your alerts off when using a Smartboard.

Information defined as sensitive by the Data Protection Act should not be conveyed by email. Sensitive information includes the Protected Characteristics of race, ethnicity, belief, religion, sexual orientation as well as information about trade union membership, political views, health, sex life, criminal offences.

### **3.6 Managing Email Records**

Where any email correspondence is no longer required by you or as a record it should be deleted.

### **3.6 Implementation of the Policy and Procedures**

3.6.1 Training on use of electronic will be included as part of the induction of all new members of staff. Managers are required to ensure that all new members of staff have received the training prior to using the systems.

- 3.6.2 Regular monitoring of electronic systems use will be carried out on a random basis by the ISLT department. The College reserves the right to inspect any and all files stored in private areas of the College network to ensure compliance with these guidelines. Line managers will be notified of inappropriate use of the systems.
- 3.6.3 All E-mail users will be issued with a unique individual password which is confidential to the user. Access to the E-mail system using another member of staff's password without prior authorisation is likely to result in disciplinary action, which may include dismissal.
- 3.6.4 Users must ensure that critical information is not stored solely within the E-mail system. Hard copies must be kept or stored separately on the system. If necessary documents must be password protected.
- 3.6.5 Communications - intensive operations such as large file transfers, mass E-mailings and the like should be scheduled for off-peak times.
- 3.6.6 Users should familiarise themselves with data protection requirements.
- 3.6.7 Members of staff who feel that they have cause for complaint as a result of E-mail communications should raise the matter initially with their immediate line manager. If necessary the complaint can then be raised through the grievance procedure.

### **4.0 Responsibilities**

- 4.1 The SMT are responsible for the implementation of this policy.
- 4.2 The Head of HR and Development is responsible for the operation of this policy.
- 4.3 The Head of ISLT is responsible for the management of electronic systems.
- 4.4 All staff are responsible for ensuring compliance with this policy and procedure.

## **5.0 Related Documents**

5.1 Discipline Policy and Procedure

5.2 Grievance Policy and Procedure

5.3 Information Security Policy

## **6.0 Review**

This policy will be reviewed every 3 years.



## Equality Impact Assessment

(Rapid impact assessment tool)

**What Impacts may there be from this proposal on any group's ability to use the College services?**

**Policy: Electronic Systems Policy and Procedure**

<b>Positive Impacts (Groups affected)</b>	<b>Negative Impacts (Groups affected)</b>
This policy is implemented equally for all staff. The positive impact it may have is to ensure that all staff are treated equally regardless of any protected characteristic and that if anyone with a protected characteristic is discriminated against through the use of e-mail or internet they have recourse to action being taken against the staff member concerned.	None
<b>Actions taken to alleviate any negative Impacts:</b> No negative impacts	
<b>Recommendations:</b> Updated policy to be adopted	

**From the outcome of the rapid equality impact assessment, have negative impacts been identified for any protected characteristic or any other potentially disadvantaged group?**

No

**Has a full Equality Impact Assessment been recommended?**

Yes

No

**Reason for recommendation:**

No negative impacts

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Status:  
Policy Dated: November 2016  
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Equality Impact Assessed: September 2013