

POLICY AND PROCEDURES

Use of Email (Staff and Students)

This policy is important to:

- All Staff Members
- All Students
- External Entities who have access to a Victoria University email account

POLICY NUMBER: POI120815000

DATE APPROVED: 9 August 2012

POLICY CATEGORY: General (Information and Support Services)

POLICY OWNER: Director of IT Operations

1. CONTEXT

The purpose of this policy is to ensure the proper use of the University's email system and to inform users of the University's required standards for email use.

Email is a business communication tool and users are obliged to use this tool in a responsible, professional, effective and lawful manner. Although by its nature email seems to be less formal than other written communication, the same laws apply. Therefore, it is important that users are aware of the legal risks inherent in the use of e-mail:

If you send or forward an attachment that contains a virus, you and the University can be held liable.

If you send or forward emails containing

- any form of unlawful discrimination or harassment, including sexual harassment, vilification or victimisation;
- language, tone or attachments of a bullying, threatening, violent or abusive nature;
- obscene or pornographic material;
- confidential information;

then both you and the University can be held liable

Staff members who send or forward such emails may be subject to disciplinary action which may include termination of employment. Students who send or forward such emails may be subject to disciplinary action in accordance with Regulation 2.7 – Student Discipline.

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For an understanding of what Ethical Behaviors are expected at Victoria University, please refer to

- [Staff Code of Conduct](#)
- [Discrimination, Harassment and Bullying Policy \(for Staff\)](#)
- [Student Charter](#)

2. DEFINITIONS

- 2.1 **Email:** a method of exchanging digital messages by using an electronic communication device such as a PC, MAC, Smartphone, Thin Client, etc.
- 2.2 **Email Spam:** also referred to as 'junk mail'
- 2.3 **Restricted information:** information which is protected by University, Commonwealth and/or State regulation or legislation
- 2.4 **Sensitive information:** information for internal University use and not for external distribution.
- 2.5 **Spam:** The use of electronic messaging systems (including email, short message service (SMS), multimedia message service (MMS), instant messaging or voicemail) to send unsolicited bulk messages indiscriminately.

3. STATEMENT OF POLICY

3.1 Legal requirements

Under no circumstances is any e-mail user authorised to engage in any activity that is illegal under state, federal or international law while utilising the University's owned or managed resources, or provided to them via an external host or manager of that system.

Furthermore, email users must ensure all legislation and policies relating to Equity and Diversity are strictly followed. Relevant Legislation includes, but is not limited to;

- Racial and Religious Tolerance Act (Vic) 2001
- Equal Opportunity Act (Vic) 2010
- Age Discrimination Act (Cth) 2008
- Sex Discrimination Act (Cth) 1984
- Race Discrimination Act (Cth) 1975
- Disability Discrimination Act (Cth) 1992

Related Policies and documents staff and students must adhere to include;

- [Discrimination/Harassment and Bullying Policies and Procedures for Staff](#) (
- [Staff Code of Conduct](#)
- [Equity and Diversity Plans and Strategies for staff](#).
- [Student Charter](#)

The following actions are forbidden by law when sending or forwarding emails

- Using material which constitutes an infringement of copyright. Refer to the University's '[Copyright Material \(Use of\)](#)' policy in determining what third party material can be used.
- Defaming an individual, organisation, association, company or business.
- Communications that are obscene, offensive or involve the use of illegal material, including the use or transfer of material of a sexual nature

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- Breaching a university policy, procedure, statute or regulation.
- Directly or indirectly interfering with or conflicting with lawful University business.
- Intentionally bringing the University or its officers into disrepute.
- Sending unsolicited and unauthorised global or commercial email messages.
- Forging or attempting to forge email messages.

Any emails received of this nature should be forwarded via email for reporting and investigatory purposes to the ITS Security Office at itsso@vu.edu.au. All email forwarded to the ITS Security Office must be marked as high importance. Each case will be assessed and proper action will be taken based on the severity of the breach.

Staff and students at VU undertaking research may send emails containing such materials provided that it demonstrably refers to their area of research and is done so in a responsible manner. The use of the "on the behalf of" option is permitted to be used by Victoria University, with the approval of the email account holder.

Emails can be sent on behalf of another user as long as the user has given the appropriate permissions.

3.2 Personal Use

Although the University's email system is meant for business use, the University allows the reasonable use of email for personal use under the following conditions:

- Personal use of email should not interfere with work.
- Personal emails must adhere to this policy.
- Users are discouraged to forward nuisance emails such as chain letters, junk mail, jokes and frivolous attachments. Must not be used to run a private business whether for profit or not for-profit.

3.3 Spam

The sending of unauthorised and unsolicited global or commercial email transmissions (spam) is forbidden.

3.4 Sensitive and restricted information

Avoid sending sensitive and restricted official information by e-mail. If you do, you should secure the information by including it in a Microsoft Word or Excel file and protecting it with a password, and then provide the recipient with the password by means of other communication, for instance by telephone.

The University recommends any information users consider sensitive or vulnerable be encrypted, especially for transmission to external organisations.

3.5 Disclaimer

The following disclaimer will be added to each outgoing email: '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 Victoria University. Finally, the recipient should check this email and any attachments for the presence of viruses. Victoria University accepts no liability for any damage caused by any virus transmitted by this email.'

3.6 System Monitoring

Your emails may be monitored for the operational integrity of the Victoria University Infrastructure and/or to comply with legal or regulatory requirements. The policy for this is set out in the [IT Audit Authorities Policy](#). If there is evidence that a student or staff member is not adhering to the guidelines set out in this policy, the University reserves the right to take disciplinary action, including termination and/or legal action.

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3.7 Passwords

All Email accounts maintained on the University's email systems are property of the University. Passwords must not be disclosed to other people unless it is necessary for approved operations of the University. . The University will NEVER ask you to provide your email username and password by email. If you receive a message asking you to respond with details of your username and password, it is a forgery. If you provide these details to third parties fraudulently masquerading as University officials, you will be responsible for all actions carried out using your account by those third parties.

For information regarding our Password Policy, refer to Appendix B.

3.8 Styling

All University emails must not contain customised backgrounds. Backgrounds should remain as a default that is provided by the email application.

4. PROCEDURES

4.1 Refer to Appendix A in Best Practices when using Email

4.2 Procedures for dealing with breaches to this policy can be found in the [Breach of ITS Policies Procedure](#)

5. POLICY ADVISOR

Associate Director ITS, Enterprise Services

6. RELATED POLICIES AND LEGISLATION

6.1 Related Policies

[Appropriate Use of ICT Policy \(POI120427000\)](#)

[IT Staff Audit Authorities Policy \(POI110330003\)](#)

[Internal Bulk Mail Policy \(POI110511004\)](#)

[Staff Code of Conduct \(POH120507000\)](#)

[Discrimination, Harassment and Bullying Policy \(for Staff\) \(POE091214001\)](#)

[Equity and Diversity \(for Staff\) Policy \(POE100813000\)](#)

[Use of Copyright Material \(POA120319000\)](#)

[Breach of ITS Policies Procedure \(ITg-P2007-60\)](#)

All University policies are recorded in the [Central Policy Register](#)

A list of all existing IT Policy related documents (i.e. ITu, ITi, ITg and ITo) are published on the [ITS Policies Web Page](#)

6.2 Relevant Legislation

The Privacy Act 1988;

The Crimes Act 1914;

The Copyright Act 1968; and,

The Freedom of Information Act 1984;

The Spam Act 2003.

Racial and Religious Tolerance Act (Vic) 2001

Equal Opportunity Act (Vic) 2010

Age Discrimination Act (Cth) 2008

Sex Discrimination Act (Cth) 1984

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Race Discrimination Act (Cth) 1975

Disability Discrimination Act (Cth) 1992

[Victoria University Regulation 2.7 - Discipline](#)

6.3 Acknowledgement

[Victoria University's Discrimination, Harassment and Bullying Policy for staff](#)

SANS (SysAdmin, Audit, Network, Security) Institute <http://www.sans.org/resources/policies/>

University of Melbourne (Staff Use of the University's Internet, E-mail and Electronic

Communications Policy)

7. CONSULTATION AND ACCOUNTABILITIES

7.1 Consultation

7.1.1 Information Knowledge Management Committee (IKMC)

7.1.2 University Wide Consultation

7.1.3 Approved by Vice-Chancellor

7.2 Accountabilities

7.2.1 RESPONSIBILITY

Director of IT Operations, for the management of the policy.

Information Technology Services –Enterprise Services Branch for operational compliance of the policy.

7.2.2 IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

The Enterprise Services Branch of Information Technology Services will be responsible for the overall implementation of this policy.

7.2.3 TRAINING PLAN

Training will be given in Staff Induction programs.

Refer to the [Staff Email Information](#) documentation available on the ITS web site.

7.2.4 COMPLIANCE

Should it be considered by the Responsible Officer that a staff member has breached this policy the Responsible Officer will recommend to the Vice-Chancellor and President through the relevant Principal Officer that sanctions be invoked against that officer. Sanctions include, but are not limited to, the withdrawal of the staff member's access to the University email and computer network.

In serious cases non-compliance may lead to termination of employment.

Students who have breached this policy may face disciplinary actions as stated in [Victoria University's Regulation 2.7 – Discipline](#).

7.2.5 EFFECTIVENESS OF THIS POLICY

There will be periodic checks to ensure that this policy is effective and is being adhered to.

8. FORMS

Application for [Email Access](#)

9. APPENDICIES

9.1 Appendix A

Best Practice Guidelines for Email

The University considers email an important means of communication and recognises the importance of proper email content. Therefore the University wishes users to adhere to the following best practice guidelines:

Writing emails:

- The title of the email should reflect the contents therein.
- Write well-structured emails and use short, descriptive subjects.
- The University's email style is informal. This means that sentences can be short and to the point. You can start your e-mail with 'Hi', or 'Dear', and the name of the person. Messages can be ended with 'Best Regards'.
- Signatures must include your name, position and faculty/department. A disclaimer will be added underneath your signature (see Disclaimers)
- Use the spell checker before you send out an email.
- Do not send unnecessary attachments. Send links and/or use shared drives.
- Do not write emails in capitals.
- If you forward mails, state clearly what action you expect the recipient to take.
- Only mark emails as important if they really are important.

Replying to emails:

Emails should ideally be answered within at least 8 working hours, but users should endeavour to answer priority emails within 4 hours.

Maintenance:

Delete any email messages that you do not need to have a copy of, and either set your email to automatically empty your 'deleted items' on closing or regularly empty your deleted items folder.

9.2 Appendix B

Password Policy

To comply with current and future auditing requirements, complexity requirements are enabled for Active Directory accounts which are used to read Exchange mailboxes. They require at least three of the following four character groups when selecting a password:

- English uppercase characters (A through Z);
- English lowercase characters (a through z);
- Numerals (0 through 9);
- Non-alphabetic characters (such as !, \$, #, %)

All passwords need to be eight (8) characters or greater.
You cannot have your first name or surname as part of the password.

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Version approval date	Summary of changes
9 August 2012 (POI120815000)	Minor amendments via review.
3 October 2011 (POI01004003)	Minor amendments via review. Policy also renamed to <i>Use of Email (Staff and Students)</i>
13 May 2009 (POI1004002)	Minor amendments made to section 5.1 Legal Requirements
21 May 2008 (POI1004001)	Minor amendments
1 June 2006 (POI11004000)	Minor amendments
9 May 2005 (POI050524001)	New Policy – renamed to <i>Appropriate Use of Email</i>
7 May 2003 (POI040809006)	Existing policy placed on Central Policy Register – <i>Policy and Code of Good Practice for Electronic Mail and Internet Services</i>