Email etiquette
IT Services Documentation Team, September 2013 (Reviewed July 2014)

− **Remember the laws of the land** relating to written communication apply equally to email, including laws on defamation, copyright, obscenity, fraud and discrimination.

− **Remember that the Internet is an open world** - treat the security of email messages you send off-campus about the same as a postcard i.e. anyone along the chain of distribution might see what you have written. Even for within-campus messages, think carefully before sending sensitive or confidential information by email.

− **Make a good impression** - your email may be seen by persons who don't know you or the University, so ensure that what you write and how you write it gives the reader the right impression.

− **Be polite** - adhere to the same standards as you would when writing a letter. If you TYPE LIKE THIS, for example, people will think you are shouting. Swear-words are a complete 'no no', even if you might use such words in conversation with the person to whom you are sending the email.

− **Use humour and sarcasm with care** - not everyone will appreciate it and without voice inflection and body language, mail messages can be easily misinterpreted. It sometimes helps to use 'emoticons' such as a smiley face e.g. :-) but use them sparingly.

− **Don't ‘Flame’** - Flames are messages or replies that express anger or might anger the reader. Don’t get involved in flame wars. Neither post nor respond to incendiary mail.

− **Keep it simple** - email is good for factual information, but not for matters that require tact and diplomacy. People are busy - don’t add to their information overload.

− **Identify yourself** - you can use a signature file to put your name at the end of your email automatically (but it’s good netiquette to keep it short).

− **Ensure your email is going to the right destination** - it can be easy to use the wrong email address by mistake and your message may be delivered to the wrong person or group. If you do find a message has been misdelivered, send an apology to the person or to the group.

− **Check your reply settings** - it is easy to use ‘Reply-All’ by mistake, and this could be very embarrassing for you and very annoying to others.

− **Use a meaningful ‘subject’ field** - don’t leave it blank; this is very irritating.

− **Clear out your mailbox regularly** - there is limited space in your mailbox. Old mail will be moved aside if you go over quota. Move messages you want to keep into mail folders. See Outlook mail archiving solutions

− **Don’t send an attachment unless you need to** - attachments, such as Word documents, are much larger than the corresponding text and they can be awkward to handle if the recipient doesn’t have the corresponding application. If the formatting is not necessary, insert the text into the body of your email message instead of using an attachment.

− **Take care with the size of your message** - they slow down mail system performance and some Internet mail systems will reject large messages or delay delivery. Large messages are usually caused by including a very large attachment or multiple attachments. A good rule of thumb is to keep the message size below 50KB. Split your attachments across more than one message, if all together they will exceed this size.

− **When replying to a message, think carefully whether to reproduce the original message in your response** - If it's not necessary, don’t do it. If you need to refer to it, be selective in the parts that you include.

− **If you need to send mail regularly to a long list of people, create a mailing list** - this avoids long lists of recipients at the top of everyone’s copy. See our guidelines for creating and maintaining mailing lists.

− **Don’t send anonymous mail or ‘spoof’ your address** - in 99% of cases, your email can be traced back to its source; disciplinary action may then follow.

− **Don’t ‘Spam’** - i.e. Don’t send electronic garbage. Sending junk email, such as advertisements or other unsolicited material, to mailing lists, newsgroups, list servers or to anyone you don’t know is considered ‘spamming’.

− **Don’t reply to chain-letters** - these are an absolute ‘no-no’ on all networks.

And finally... please read and comply with the University’s Conditions for using IT Facilities.

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1 IT Policies are published in the Policy Zone on StaffNet – see www.abdn.ac.uk/staffnet/governance