

Staff email: General guidance and etiquette

It's important to take care when sending personal information by email. Follow our top tips below.

1. Is email the right way of communicating?

Think about the topic and the information you want to convey.

2. Your work email is not your own private correspondence and emails may be shared.

The content of any email sent from your University account could be subject to Freedom of Information or Subject Access Requests.

Information about other people within your emails may have to be shared in such circumstances.

For further guidance, please contact the Information Governance Team – dpa@abdn.ac.uk.

3. Think of your email like a postcard.

Remember that emails sent outwith the University can be seen by anyone along the chain of distribution so make sure they don't contain anything you wouldn't want those outside the email conversation to have access to.

4. Keep to one topic/person per email.

It is not good practice to discuss more than one staff member/customer/student etc. in the same email.

5. Make sure your message is clear.

Make it clear to recipients if the content of an email is confidential or if it should not be forwarded.

6. Think carefully about the subject line.

While a meaningful subject line helps recipients determine the email content and its importance, it should not include personal data.

7. Be polite and make a good impression.

Make sure that your tone is appropriate and respectful and that the information included is accurate.

Don't 'Flame' – i.e. post, or respond to, an incendiary 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.

8. Make sure that you select the correct recipient.

Most data protection breaches are due to misdirected emails, often due to Outlook's Auto-Complete function. See our separate user guide to find out [how to turn off Auto-Complete](#).

It is better to select your recipient from Outlook's Address Book as it reduces the chance of you sending to the wrong person.

9. Wrong recipient?

If you notice that you have sent an email to the wrong person, contact the recipient and ask them to delete the email and then contact the *Information Governance Team* dpa@abdn.ac.uk to report.

10. Identify yourself.

Use a 'signature' to insert your name and, if appropriate, contact details at the end of your email automatically (but it's good netiquette to keep it short).

11. Check your reply settings.

Make sure you reply only to those relevant – it's not always necessary or appropriate to *Reply to All*.

Think carefully whether to include the original message text 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.

12. Be aware of the CC and Bcc fields.

Are you happy for all recipients to see who you are copying into your email? Or would the blind carbon copy (Bcc) field be a better choice? Misuse of these fields could lead to a data protection breach.

13. Finally...

Please read and comply with the *University's Conditions for using IT Facilities*, published in the *Policy Zone* on StaffNet – see www.abdn.ac.uk/staffnet/governance/