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# Guidelines for the Use of Email: Best Practice

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<b>Council Resolution No. (if relevant)</b>	
<b>Short description</b>	Guidelines on best practice use of email within CSU
<b>Relevant to</b>	All employees
<b>Approved by</b>	Senior Executive Committee
<b>Responsible officer</b>	Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Administration)
<b>Responsible office</b>	Office of the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Administration)
<b>Date introduced</b>	July 2008
<b>Date(s) modified</b>	
<b>Next scheduled review date</b>	March 2011
<b>Related University documents</b>	CSU Style Manual Policy for the Use of University Computing and Communication Facilities Charles Sturt University Web Policy Policy on the Allowed Access to CSUNet Code of Conduct for Staff Student General Misconduct Rule Academic Misconduct Rule CSU Charter for Electronic Messaging Records Management Policy
<b>Related legislation</b>	
<b>Key words</b>	guidelines, email, best practice

## 1. PURPOSE

- 1.1 These Guidelines have been developed to enhance the efficiency and clarity of electronic communication across the University.
- 1.2 These Guidelines aim to encourage good practice by reducing the overall volume of electronic messages by encouraging sensitivity and discretion.

## 2. SCOPE

- 2.1 Email is a professional means of communication that is the property of CSU. Do not send anything in an email that you would not put in a formal letter.
- 2.2 Email is considered a business document and, as such, can be accessed under the Freedom of Information protocols.
- 2.3 The Guidelines shall apply to all staff who use the University's email service.

## 3. GUIDELINES

- 3.1 Please refer to the CSU Style Manual for standards on electronic messaging such as acceptable fonts, the use of backgrounds, signature details and disclaimers:  
<http://www.csu.edu.au/division/marketing/stylemanual/appli/email.html>  
For further information or advice contact the Division of Marketing and/or the Branding Officer in your area see:  
<http://www.csu.edu.au/division/marketing/stylemanual/govern/brandofficers.html>
- 3.2 Whether intended for an internal or external recipient it is recommended that signatures and disclaimers be added to the end of all emails as they may potentially be forwarded to external parties.
- 3.3 Use discretion when:
  - Forwarding or copying emails to one or more recipients.
  - Including the original content when replying to a message
  - Seeking automatic confirmation of the reading of a message by the addressees
  - Sending electronic messages if a telephone call would be a more appropriate alternative.
  - Sending a message(s) to multiple recipients if it could be better communicated if placed on a forum, webpage or posted on What's New or the CSU Classifieds Interact Site.
- 3.4 Where authorising an action, consider putting it in a clean, clear email.
- 3.5 Use the subject field appropriately, be clear and concise. If there is a deadline for an action or response, include it after the subject (e.g., Nomination for Conference – please respond by 31 July 2007).
- 3.6 Remember to treat email communication like any other business document. Speak in the third person and do not include subjective or personal comments.
- 3.7 Be sparing in use of the red exclamation mark and only use this for genuinely URGENT communications. Don't use capitals as they are considered to be SHOUTING.

- 3.8 Where it is not appropriate to provide the content in the body of the email and an attachment or hyperlink to a site is necessary, the email message itself should, where possible, indicate very briefly what the content relates to and its importance (e.g., ‘The attached memo summarises important changes to the policy on xxxxx. I draw your attention to actions required to implement these changes as set out in the memo’). Before placing a hyperlink in your email consider whether the recipient(s) have access to that content such as a restricted folder on the S: drive or a restricted web site. If not, you may wish to consider embedding the content rather than attaching numerous documents. If you must attach a document, convert into a PDF file to reduce its overall size.
- 3.9 Provide clear instructions about dissemination of email content and any relevant consideration such as privacy. Indicate confidentiality required in the email (e.g., ‘this matter should remain confidential among Executive Directors until such time as ...’). If the recipient is expected to distribute the email, the extent of distribution should be indicated (e.g., ‘Please distribute this information to all in your School’). Be cautious about using Bcc (Blind copies) as it may be considered a breach of confidentiality to send an email to a third party of whom the other recipients are not aware.
- 3.10 Emails to all CSU staff may only be sent directly by the Vice-Chancellor.
- 3.11 As per P8 of the Academic Manual, “Staff must respond to communications from students (except those on forums) at least within three working days. Where an answer takes longer to obtain students should be informed of steps being taken to respond to their inquiry.”
- 3.12 In some cases the most effective means of disseminating emails may be via the Administrative Assistant or Executive Assistant. See Key Contacts List in the CSU Communications Directory: <S:\Common>Contact Centre Project\i3\i2\index.html>. Check if global distribution lists are available to meet your requirements (e.g., Div-Marketing-Media).
- 3.13 Use ‘Out of Office’ to alert those contacting you via email of your availability, expected return date or best person to contact in your absence.
- 3.14 Do a final check to ensure the intended recipient(s) is/are correct (especially in the case of similar/multiple names at CSU). Check that punctuation, spelling and grammar are correct and that the subject line is complete.
- 3.15 Emails are subject to the same retention and disposal requirements as electronic and paper-based records. Under the State Records Act University employees are required to keep full and accurate records. As such it is important that all corporate emails (emails created, received and maintained by the University in the transaction of business activities) are kept as evidence, and where appropriate are captured within the University’s records management system; they should NOT be managed on the S:, P:, C: drive or within Outlook folders.

Table of Amendments

Version number	Date	Short description of amendment
1.0	March 2008	Introduction of Guidelines as a result of recommendations from a Heads of School conference to Internal Communication Working Party