



INTERNET AND ELECTRONIC MAIL SYSTEM: POLICY AND PROCEDURES

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POLICY BACKGROUND

The State Government of Western Australia supports the wider use of information technology to improve the efficiency of its operations and the delivery of its services to the public. Consequently there is a substantial growth in the number of public sector workers who have been provided with access to email and the internet as work tools.

In the 1999/2000 annual compliance report to parliament the Commissioner for Public Sector Standards expressed concern that the rapid growth in email and internet use has been accompanied by misuse of e-commerce facilities. The Commissioner raised the issue that misuse by employees could affect CEOs as employers, and incur legal liability for the state.

The responsibility of all employers for the ethical and efficient use of government property and services has been addressed in codes of conduct in force across the public sector, and it also applies to the use of email and the internet.

In government agencies including School Curriculum and Standards Authority, there are systems in place for auditing the use of email and the internet—internet access is logged and can be monitored if necessary. Contravention of the policy or codes of conduct can result in disciplinary action.

In the interests of a unified approach to the issue of the appropriate use of email and the internet by government agencies, the Department of Premier and Cabinet (DPC) has developed *Guidelines to assist agencies in developing email and internet policies* [http://www.egov.dpc.wa.gov.au/docs/guidelines_email_internet_200407.pdf]. The guidelines are based on established and recognised guidelines developed by a selection of WA government agencies and other states and territories, as well as international jurisdictions and sources.

School Curriculum and Standards Authority's internet and email policy and procedures follow the Department of Premier & Cabinet guidelines.

POLICY

Authority encourages staff to enhance customer services and productivity and to increase knowledge through the use of available computing and electronic communications facilities, including the use of the internet and email, within the bounds of their employment, and legal and ethical conduct requirements.

This policy is intended to cover staff use of email and internet facilities and includes recordkeeping requirements for email.

The agencies' email and internet access is logged and the chief executive officer reserves the right to monitor or appoint an officer to monitor employees' use of these facilities at any time.

Officers who knowingly breach the policy may be dealt with under the disciplinary provisions of the *Public Sector Management Act* or the provisions of any other relevant statute.

Private use of the intranet and or the electronic mail system (like private use of the telephone system) is a privilege, not a right, and as such must be brief, appropriate, lawful and proper, and must not interfere with the work of any officer or involve unethical behaviour.

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that all Authority staff who use email and internet services are aware of the conditions under which they use email as a means of correspondence with both internal and external parties, and of the risks of inappropriate internet and email use.

Scope

This policy applies to all personnel who are employed by or contracted to the Authority and use their email and internet services. It covers the following:

- **Email use by staff**

- internal
- remote
- email sent and received via external networks e.g. internet.

- **Internet use by staff**

The procedures required to ensure that internet practices comply with Authority requirements, and to ensure that the benefits of using the internet are maximised for the agencies.

Objective

The use of Authority's computing and communication resources imposes certain responsibilities and obligations on all personnel employed by or contracted to them, and is subject to the provisions of the *Public Sector Management Act 1994*, the *Western Australian Public Sector Code of Ethics* published by the Public Sector Standards Commission, and the agencies' codes of conduct. The objective of this policy is to ensure that email and internet use by personnel abides by these and all other relevant codes, laws and guidelines.

Procedures

Access for internet and email users

1. The Authority provides authorised users with access to the electronic mail system and internet for business purposes only. Access is on two levels:

- internal
- remote email

Access to both levels is provided to all permanent and contract employees with access to the network.

2. All access gained via a user ID and password is his or her responsibility. It is essential that employees keep their ID and password confidential and under no circumstances divulge this information to anyone.

Responsibilities of Internet and email users

1. These facilities are provided to assist employees in carrying out their duties. Employees are responsible for ensuring that their use of email and Internet via the network is appropriate to the mission, purpose and principles of their respective agencies. Examples of inappropriate use include:
 - malicious or unethical use
 - foul, inappropriate, offensive, threatening , harassing or racist language, including sexual harassment
 - divulgence of confidential information
 - any other use that violates State or federal law.
2. Limited personal use of facilities by staff is permitted provided
 - it does not interfere with work, or the work of anyone else and
 - it does not involve unethical behaviour
3. Messages that are defamatory or discriminatory or breach copyright or defamation laws (or any other law) could be subject to discovery in legal proceedings.

Conditions of email account use

Email account holders are expected to:

1. comply with the following guidelines for acceptable use

- act in a professional and courteous manner
- behave in accordance with the agency's code of conduct
- avoid gossip
- attach, to every email sent outside the network, a signature containing, as a minimum, name and position
- minimise use of disk space by:
 - checking email inbox daily
 - deleting unwanted emails immediately
 - keeping remaining emails to a minimum.

2. refrain from unacceptable practices including:

- publishing or sharing passwords
- sharing an account
- using somebody else's account
- using your account to conduct any business or activity for commercial purposes or financial gain, including publishing material which contains advertising or any solicitation of other network users to use goods or services
- publishing on or over the network any information which violates or infringes upon the rights of any person or any information of an abusive or profane nature or material likely to be sexually offensive
- using your account for political lobbying
- using your account to harass another person
- invading the privacy of other individuals
- misrepresenting yourself or the Authority
- attempting to read another person's emails
- publication of other people's email addresses.

If an employee receives an email that is inappropriate, as defined above, it is their obligation to:

- immediately delete the email and any attachments
- if the email is not spam, advise the sender of its inappropriateness and instruct them not to send such correspondence again, and/or discuss with a work colleague.

When on leave, employees should use the 'Out of Office Assistant' and/or redirect incoming emails, and suspend subscriptions to email lists.

Recordkeeping requirements for emails

1. Emails received and sent via the agency's network are public records and are therefore the property of the School Curriculum and Standards Authority. As such they are subject to the same legal requirements, standards and disposal requirements as other official records.
2. Emails can be of ephemeral (low value) or significant value:
 - Emails of ephemeral value contain information of low value, are current for a short time only, and do not need to be captured in the recordkeeping system for the purposes of agency accountability;
 - Emails of significant value contain evidence of the agencies' business transaction and must be retained for period of time, dependent upon the subject, in accordance with the approved Retention and Disposal schedule for the purposes of agencies accountability, and must be printed and placed on appropriate files.
3. The following guidelines are to be used to determine if an email is of significant value and has to be retained. The email:
 - reflects or calls for reply or action;
 - contains a business related decision;
 - conveys information and/or decisions on programs or policies;
 - conveys statements of official policy or rationale for official decisions;
 - documents exchanges where official policy/decisions were discussed;
 - contains precedents or negotiations on behalf of the Authority;
 - approves or authorises expenditure.

4. Placement of the hard copy of an email on the appropriate file is the responsibility of
 - the author of a sent email
 - the recipient (or employee acting on or responding to email) of an external email.
5. Emails with possible attachments documenting a business transaction must be registered in TRIM. E-mails metadata should be accurately captured in TRIM including the name of the author of the email, title (add additional information to the existing title if necessary) and its destination file number.
6. If a file is not '**electronic only**' (i.e. has a physical file) the trimmed email should also be printed and placed on a hard copy file, and then it can be deleted from MS Outlook.
7. The retention of emails is the same as for the files to which they are allocated.
8. Emails received through the School Curriculum and Standards Authority website via the info@scsa.wa.edu.au address or the 'Have Your Say' page are dealt with according to specific guidelines.
9. For further information refer to the Records and Information Management (<http://intranetcc/PoliciesProceduresGuidelines/default.aspx>) and the TRIM shortcut sheets *Management of Emails in the TRIM environment*, *Registration of an author of an email in the TRIM contacts database*, *How do I save email into TRIM?* and *How do I send email from TRIM?* all available on the intranet at TRIM help (<http://intranetcc/BusinessTools/default.aspx>)

REFERENCES

Public Sector Commission. *Guidelines to assist agencies in developing email and internet use policies*. Perth: Department of Premier and Cabinet (<http://www.publicsector.wa.gov.au/>)

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