Guidelines to the Use of Email – Last Amended September 2020

Rhodes's email services support the educational and administrative activities of the University and serve as a means of official communication by and between users and Rhodes. Whilst the University allows the email address to be used for personal information and email, it is up to an individual whether they wish to keep a separate non-Rhodes email for private use. Rhodes email users should be guided by the following guidelines.

GENERAL

All users of email must familiarise themselves with the Acceptable Use Policy and keep themselves informed of any changes to the Policy.

Incidental personal use of email is acceptable with the understanding that the primary use be job-related, and that occasional use does not adversely impact work responsibilities or the performance of the Rhodes network or other systems.

All Rhodes work and related emails will be sent and received via the Rhodes email address and you will not use a personal email address to conduct any Rhodes activities.

SECURITY

Rhodes attempts to provide secure, private and reliable email services by following sound information technology practices. However, Rhodes cannot guarantee the security, privacy or reliability of its email service. All email users, therefore, should exercise extreme caution in using Rhodes email to communicate confidential or sensitive matters, and should encrypt messages where confidentiality is a concern.

Avoid opening unexpected attachments from unknown or even known senders, or follow web links or opening .zip attachments within an email message unless the user is certain that the link is legitimate. Following a link in an email message executes code that can also install malicious programs on the workstation.

Avoid responding to pleas for financial assistance, purchasing of vouchers from any email address that is not exactly like the Rhodes email address. @ict.ru.ac.za is not a Rhodes email address.

Avoid responding to emails that appear odd and don't reflect the way the person it supposedly from normally write in an email.

Do not fill out forms via a direct link from within the email. Access the page by typing it into a browser yourself or via the usual way that you access the site.   More information about the risks of identity theft can be found on the Information & Technology Services phishing page.

When replying to a message, ensure that your reply is addressed to the email addresses you intend your reply to be sent to. A Reply-To header in the original message may result in your reply being addressed to addresses other than you may have in mind.

Always check that you are replying to all or to sender and select your response appropriately. It is not necessary to respond to all when invited to a meeting. Responding to the organiser to submit apologies is acceptable, responding to all is not.

ACCOUNT CREATION/ENTITLEMENT

Email services are provided only while a user is employed or studying at the University and once a user's electronic services are terminated, employees may no longer access the contents of their mailboxes unless stated within the Identity Management Framework.

Other users are guided by the Identity Management Framework. Request access for guests only where appropriate.

Departments that provide services in response to email requests should request a shared mailbox to help support departmental functional continuity for managing requests sent via email, and ensure that access to the shared mailbox is transferred when staffing changes.

ETIQUETTE

Understand that email can convey no emotion and therefore is often misinterpreted.

Before sending an email that might invoke an emotional response, consider whether it is necessary and at the very least re-read the content for accuracy.

Always consider the impact of the content and how it will be received when sending an email.

Never respond to an email immediately if it has envoked anger in you. Respond after you have calmed down. Read your response out loud before sending.

Consider who needs to know before copying all and sundry into email conversation eg. Email can be a useful tool to keep people informed without the need for a meeting but it does not serve a useful end when used to "complain" to someone

Keep your mailbox up to date and within quota. Official University communications should be read on a regular basis since those communications may affect day-to-day activities and responsibilities. Students should be aware that the University will send

official correspondence to their Rhodes-approved address, and they are expected to read such correspondence regularly. For students first registered prior to 2015, such messages are delivered to a Rhodes mailbox unless an autoforward to another address is configured. For students first registered in 2015 or later, such messages are delivered to the personal e-mail address provided during registration or subsequently updated on ROSS.

If you are copied in on an email it is usually for information purposes only and not necessary for you to comment or reply. Understanding your role within the University as well as the reason you have been copied in should be a consideration before responding to an email you have been copied into. Email senders should be aware of how they use the address field and the copy field when sending mail as the use of these fields should solicit different behaviours from the receiver as described above.

Email etiquette involves the following:
- Responding timeously to an email you receive
- Ensure that if you have received an email incorrectly it is forwarded to the correct person or returned to the sender
- Being cautious of unnecessary reply-to-all use
- Being cautious of forwarding the body of an email as sent when the words of the email may carry a different meaning to the receiver and may expose unnecessary tensions. Emails you receive may be drafted in a certain manner because of the relationship you have with the sender and the receiver that you forward the email to may not have the same relationship. Be professional in your communications

AUTOREPLIES

When you are out of office create an Out of Office message which should include who to contact in your absence as well as details regarding when you will be back or what you are likely to respond to whilst away. Failure to do so may result in the University authority granting permission for I&TS to do so as per the Emergency Access to ICT Accounts and Information Policy.

Do not set an out of office response on your mailbox to indicate that you are busy and experiencing high volumes of traffic. This message creates superfluous email and does not abdicate you from your responsibility to respond to an email.

MAILING LISTS

To receive general announcements, staff should subscribe to the toplist@lists mailing list (this is done automatically for new staff); it is recommended that students subscribe to the studentnews@lists mailing list (new students are automatically invited to join it). Other mailing lists are also available for appropriate membership.

Mailing lists such as toplist are intended for announcements rather than discussion. Avoid replying to email received from such a mailing list; rather direct follow-up messages to the author of the message.