gsa

1. GSA Email Policy

Purpose

This document sets out guidelines for acceptable and effective use of email while employed or engaged by GSA. It also describes recommended practices and habits to help employees/elected student representatives, volunteers and interns to communicate efficiently over email.

Scope

This procedure applies to all GSA employees/elected representatives, including casuals and volunteers. It applies to all instances and use of any GSA-specific email address. It includes the use of email outside of business hours, and the use of email on a non-work computer, or any other devices such as phones or tablets.

It does not cover Electronic Direct Mail (EDM) strategic marketing, which falls under social media policies and procedures.

The topics covered by this procedure include:

1. Email security and confidentiality
2. Acceptable use of email (business and personal)
3. Inappropriate use of email
4. Email signatures and disclaimers
5. Email use outside of business hours or when on leave
6. Email etiquette and best practice

Procedures

1. Email security and confidentiality

Email is not an inherently secure or confidential form of communication. Users should be aware of the risks of unauthorised access, unexpected redistribution and technological problems, and should take precautions whenever possible.

1.1 Security

- Avoid opening attachments from unknown sources, in case they contain malware. If in doubt, consult Business Operations staff for advice.
- Use the available virus scanning and email scanning tools installed by IT staff, even when dealing with known sources. Remember that those precautions are not perfect and exercise caution.
- Avoid sending confidential data via email. Consult Business Operations staff for other available methods of handling sensitive information.

1. GSA Email Policy
Reviewed on: May2023

Approved by: CEO
Approval Date: May 2023

Version: 2
Next Review Date: May 2025
Page **1** of **5**

1.2 Confidentiality

All emails sent or received through the organisation's email system are part of official GSA records. The organisation can be legally compelled to show email information to law enforcement agencies or other parties. Users should ensure that information sent via email is accurate, appropriate, ethical and legal.

2. Acceptable use of email (business and personal)

Employees and elected representatives are allowed to use their GSA email address for all work-related purposes, and for reasonably limited personal purposes.

2.1 Business email use

Email is an extremely common way to communicate both internally and externally.

It can be used for:
- Communicating with colleagues, students, suppliers and members of the public.
- Sharing documents and materials.
- Having discussions and sharing ideas.
- Signing up for website accounts, newsletters, and online services.

Users are expected to check their email during normal work hours, but can use their own discretion for how frequently they check.
- If a user knows in advance that they will be unavailable for a full normal working day or longer, consider setting up an auto-reply message (covered in section 5).

2.2 Personal email use

GSA recognises that email can be an important tool in daily life, and allows GSA email accounts to be used for personal reasons, provided such use is reasonably limited.
- Personal emails that are not time-sensitive should be put off until lunch or a similar break.
- Avoid representing personal views as representing those of GSA.

All relevant GSA Human Resources guidelines apply to personal email use as well as business use. For instance, sending inappropriate content is always inappropriate, regardless of whether it was for business or personal reasons.

2.3 Non-GSA personal email addresses

Using a non-GSA personal email address – such as a Gmail address – can be used sparingly for work purposes when needed, such as website accounts, signing up to newsletters or for cloud-sharing and storage purposes such as Google Drive. Communication through non-GSA email addresses should be avoided when conducting official work in the person's capacity as a staff or student reprentative or otherwise on behalf of GSA.

1. GSA Email Policy
Reviewed on: May2023

Approved by: CEO
Approval Date: May 2023

Version: 2
Next Review Date: May 2025
Page **2** of **5**

- Using a non-GSA email address falls under the same policies and procedures as a GSA account if used for work purposes, or when used on any GSA-owned device.

3. Inappropriate use

Email must not be used for:

- illegal purposes
- bullying or harassment
- spreading inappropriate or offensive content
- spreading defamatory or discriminatory comments
- perpetuating viruses, malware or spam

Email must be used in a manner consistent with other relevant GSA Human Resources policies and procedures or organisational policies.

4. Email signatures and disclaimers

4.1 Signatures

Users are required to include a standard GSA signature in all outgoing emails.

A GSA standard email signature includes name, title, the organisation's name and address, the user's contact details, an acknowledgement of the Wurundjeri People, and (usually) a promotional image.

- At times, employees can choose from a selection of different promotional images, as advised by the communications team.
- There are currently 'generic' image banners that can be used when no other promotional image is relevant.

The recommended signature is typically provided by GSA communications staff, who can assist with formatting or provide advice.

4.2 Disclaimers

GSA recommends the following as Disclaimer statement.

NOTICE -

This email and any attachments are confidential and intended solely for the use of the individual to whom it is addressed. If you are not the intended recipient, you have received this email in error and any use, dissemination, forwarding, printing or copying of this email is strictly prohibited. If you have received this email in error, please notify the University of Melbourne Graduate Student Association by replying to this email and deleting it from your computer.

1. GSA Email Policy
Reviewed on: May2023

Approved by: CEO
Approval Date: May 2023

Version: 2
Next Review Date: May 2025
Page **3** of **5**

5. Email use outside of business hours or when on leave

5.1 Checking email outside work hours
- Employees/elected representatives are welcome to check their email outside of business hours if they see fit to.
  - However, this is not required except in unusual circumstances.
- Employees/elected student representatives are encouraged to take measures to avoid checking their emails compulsively in their spare time. Turning off phone notifications or setting up 'do not disturb' schedules are good examples of how to protect work emails from intruding on free time.
  - Similarly, employees should respect the free time of colleagues who are on leave. This means redirecting enquiries to other staff whenever appropriate, and minimising sending emails that will clog up the inbox of staff who are away.

5.2 "Out of office" auto-replies
- Auto-replies are not necessary for lunch breaks, weekends, public holidays or typical non-business hours.
- In cases of illness (personal leave), it is understandable if an employee cannot set up an auto-reply.
  - However, if the leave is expected to last for an extended period, activating an existing auto-reply is preferable.
- For any planned leave (such as annual leave), employees should set up an auto-reply to cover their absence. Auto-reply settings and dates can usually be scheduled in advance.
- Users can decide on the best wording of their auto-reply to suit their role.
  - Example: "Thank you for your email. I am currently away on leave, returning on [date]. If you need assistance before then, please forward your email to [colleague name] at [address]."

6. Email etiquette and best practice

6.1 Respect other people's time

Most people get a large amount of email, and reading it can be time-consuming. Make your email concise, easy to read, and get to the point as early as possible.

- Use a clear subject line that specifies the topic. Avoid vague subject lines like "Hey" or "Here's an update".
- Use "CC" (carbon copy) sparingly. Don't CC everyone who might be interested "just in case" – think about whether they really need to receive it, and whether they will know what it's about.
- If forwarding an email to someone, write a sentence or two to provide them with context.
  - Ask yourself: What section do they need to read, and what do you want the recipient to do in response?
  - This is especially important for long conversation chains. Consider

1. GSA Email Policy
Reviewed on: May2023

Approved by: CEO
Approval Date: May 2023

Version: 2
Next Review Date: May 2025
Page **4** of **5**

deleting any unnecessary parts of a long chain, and make an effort to re-state key information rather than asking people to sift through to find it.
- If you are asking someone to provide a specific answer or do a specific task, remember to state this as clearly and succinctly as possible. Don't bury an important request under a mountain of information.

6.2 Consider using methods other than email
- If the matter is urgent or complex, consider contacting the person by phone or meeting with them in person instead of (or in addition to) sending an email. This can help to open the discussion, and is often easier and quicker than writing a complex email anyway.
- Some conversations are better suited to different platforms, such as instant messaging via Teams. Using such platforms can be better than clogging up a person's email inbox, and can be better for informal conversations or quick questions – but use your own discretion.

Related policies and procedures

- GSA Code of Conduct
- GSA Privacy Policy
- GSA Respectful Workplace Policy

1. GSA Email Policy
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Version: 2
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Page **5** of **5**