



POLICY ON E-MAIL COMMUNICATION WITH STUDENTS

Approved:

Senate

Board of Governors

September 17, 2003 (Minute 13)

September 29, 2003 (Minute 10)

Full history appears at the end of this document.

Introduction

As a service to students, the growing need for timely and efficient communication requires that McGill University institute a policy establishing e-mail as an official means of communicating with students. In order to implement e-mail as an official means of communication between the University administration and students, timely receipt of announcements and notifications must be guaranteed. To this end, e-mail routing must be confined to the University's network, and delivery to the official e-mail address must be verifiable.

Scope

The policy applies to any student who is, or has been, assigned a Uniform E-Mail Address (UEA), as well as McGill employees who manage official communications with students.

Policy Statement

E-mail is one of the official means of communication between McGill University and its students. As with all official University communications, it is the student's responsibility to ensure that time-critical e-mail is accessed, read, and acted upon in a timely fashion. If a student chooses to forward University e-mail to another e-mail mailbox, it is that student's responsibility to ensure that the alternate account is viable.

It is a violation for any user of official McGill e-mail addresses to impersonate a University officer, a member of the faculty, staff or student body, in line with the McGill University "Code of Computer User Conduct" and relevant federal and provincial legislation.

Procedures

McGill University uses e-mail as an official means of notification and for announcements that affect student-university relations, recognizing that

- (a) caution should always be exercised in communicating sensitive matters by e-mail,¹
- (b) privacy should not be assumed when employing that method of communication,
- (c) great care must be taken to ensure that the e-mail is addressed only to the intended recipients,
- (d) the use of file attachments with email communications is discouraged unless the sender has verified that the attachments will be accessible to and readable by all intended recipients, and
- (e) all official electronic communications are subject to the University Archives/Records Management policies. Offices creating official communications are responsible for consulting with the University Archives to coordinate retention of these communications.

Upon registration, each McGill student will be assigned an official McGill University “uniform e-mail address” (UEA), normally a variation of FirstName.MiddleName.LastName@mail.mcgill.ca. The mailbox will normally be terminated if a student withdraws from the University, but can be re-activated if the student re-enrolls within the time limits established by other relevant University policies. Official University communications may be sent to this e-mail address. Upon graduation, students benefit from a McGill “e-mail for life” account using the same name convention.

While the manner in which e-mail is accessed is left to the student’s discretion, it is recommended that students access the mail sent to their UEA directly from the McGill system. There are considerable risks in forwarding e-mail from the student’s official University e-mail address to another e-mail address (e.g., @aol.com, @hotmail.com, any other internet service provider, or to an address on a departmental server). Forwarded messages may be delayed, lost in transit at various points along the Internet outside the McGill University network, or rejected by the targeted mailbox. In addition, students are encouraged to clear their mailboxes regularly to ensure that there is enough available space for new messages. Failure to receive or read a notification in a timely manner does not release the student from the obligation of knowing and complying with its content.

Exception

In cases of course-related e-mail, faculty may assume that a student’s official UEA is a legitimate means of communicating with students registered in their classes. However, professors may expect students to pick up course-related e-mail through course management software (e.g., WebCT). Students must comply with course requirements communicated to them by e-mail from their course instructor/s or teaching assistant/s, whether it is sent to their official University e-mail address or to their course-related e-mail address.

¹ *Examples of sensitive information include but are not limited to a student’s perm code, date of birth, social insurance number, address or specific grades.*

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