Guidance on Email Best Practice

This Guidance has been produced to support email best practice, so that we can make efficient Whilst email needs to be managed.

1.   Managing your Inbox

- ### Frequency of checking emails
  Make sure you check your email as frequently as is required to carry out your role, but it may help to set specific times aside during the working day to deal with email. This helps you

  to have uninterrupted blocks of time when you can focus on other work without interrupting your productive flow by checking email messages. For example, you might choose to check your email 3-4 times a day, or when you arrive at work, after lunch and before you leave each day.

- ### Email Preview
  Consider turning off any email notifications or sound alerts when new messages arrive, so that you are less distracted and have more control over your working day.

- ### Organise your email
  Clear out your inbox - it reduces clutter and stress. Do not store emails in your inbox; move them into organised folders (see 'Saving Emails' below). A cluttered inbox risks items being overlooked, missed or forgotten. By keeping a clear inbox you can take charge of your day and your work priorities. Consider taking the following approach:

  1. Deal with emails which only need a quick response as soon as possible
  2. File emails requiring a longer, more considered response in a pending file
  3. Delete or organise old emails into archive folders in outlook (see section 5).

- ### Try not to encourage unhealthy expectations in others
  You should not feel that you must respond to emails immediately, out of hours, when on leave, etc unless it is part of your role, or an emergency. You should ensure that if you are on annual leave, an out of office email provides a clear alternative University contact. You

  should, of course, agree this with that alternative contact and/or your line manager first.

2.   Email Creation

- ### Is email the correct tool?
  Before writing an email, pause and consider if it is the most appropriate communication method. Face-to-face or a quick telephone call may be more effective, particularly if the topic is sensitive, confidential or very urgent. Try to avoid sending emails in the same office or team as you unless it is absolutely necessary.

- ### Response time expectations
  The use of mobiles and tablets has led to people expecting a very fast response to emails - even at evenings and weekends. Generally, common sense should prevail. During the working week, it is not reasonable to expect a response in less than 24 hours, unless the request is genuinely urgent. It is not reasonable to expect a response in the evenings and at weekends, unless the matter is genuinely urgent. If a response if required in minutes or even a few hours, then email is probably not the most effective communication tool.

  Wherever possible avoid using email for urgent matters: pick up the phone or have a face-to-face conversation. Regularly flagging emails as urgent creates an artificial environment in which people feel they must view each email as it arrives. This creates an unpredictable and inefficient working day. Perhaps use the 'three hour' rule - for anything where you need a response within three hours consider using an alternative method of communication (phone or in person).

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- **Use proper spelling, grammar and punctuation -** this is important as poor spelling, grammar and punctuation can give the wrong impression and will not help you to convey your message. Messages with no full stops and commas are difficult to read and can distort the meaning of your message.
- **Tone** – think about how your email may sound to its recipient. Tone is sometimes quite easy to misconstrue in an email, so make sure that you are polite and courteous.
- **Attachments** - avoid sending large attachment or documents these can use up large amounts of space in your email storage. Instead, use a shared folder or Onedrive. This is particularly important in relation to personal or confidential information which should always be shared via shared folders, Onedrive, phone or face-to-face.
- **Email signatures** - All emails (including replies and forwards) should include an email signature as set per the University's approved email footer. Instructions for applying the email signature template:

  1. Open a new email message
  2. On the **Message** tab, choose **Signature** > **Signatures**
  3. Under **Select signature to edit**, choose New, and in the

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<u>Never</u> forward virus, phishing or chain emails. If you receive a message warning you of a virus that will damage your PC, it is almost certainly a hoax. By forwarding hoax and