

Cabot  
Learning  
Federation

Internet and Email  
Usage Policy

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## 1. Introduction

- 1.1 Use of the internet and communicating by email is a standard part of Federation life. However, misuse of the email system and the internet creates significant problems. These include volumes of inappropriate email affecting legitimate email use and the use of emails to send improper messages or materials. Improper statements in email messages can lead to serious risks for the Federation and for individual employees. Therefore, please think before you send or reply to emails.
- 1.2 In view of this the Federation has formulated an email and internet use policy which will apply to all employees and to all computer equipment connected to or otherwise accessing Federation Academies' networks or other facilities. The rules set out below are designed to regulate the use of emails and to protect both the Federation and its employees.
- 1.3 Employees should be aware that non compliance with the rules could constitute a serious disciplinary offence which may amount to gross misconduct.
- 1.4 Academies within the Federation operate active measures to monitor email use and internet access and may intercept and examine any emails or other materials sent or received using the Federation's servers or other systems. Emails infringing the rules are liable to be removed from the system without notice and reported to the relevant authorities.

## 2. Rules of Conduct

2.1 The following rules must be observed.

### 2.2 Use of the Computer System

- 2.2.1 Employees may only connect non-Federation hardware to their Academy's system if they have the prior express agreement of the Senior Leadership Team member with responsibility for IT or the Principal.
- 2.2.2 Employees must use the system in a responsible manner and must not interfere with the work of others on the system. In particular employees must not:
  - Create, transmit or cause to be transmitted any material which is intended to or may cause inconvenience, annoyance, offence or which is obscene or defamatory or contains sexually explicit language or material or which infringes the copyright of another person.
  - Use Academy computer systems for playing games other than for educational purposes.
  - Gain or attempt to gain deliberate unauthorised access to facilities of services accessible via local or national or international networks.
  - Gain unauthorised access to, or violate the privacy of, other people's files or corrupt or destroy other people's data or in any way disrupt the work of other people.
  - Disclose passwords to third parties without the Federation's consent.

### 2.3 Use of the Internet

- 2.3.1 Employees are generally only allowed to use internet facilities to the extent genuinely required in the fulfilment of their employment duties.

- 2.3.2 Employees must not access, store or create any material for Federation or personal purposes which might be regarded as defamatory, obscene, sexually explicit or offensive on the grounds of race, sex, disability, sexual orientation, religion or age. Accessing, storing or creating any such material, other than in the normal course of the employee's duties, may amount to gross misconduct.
- 2.3.3 All Academies within the Federation monitor use of the internet system and may check files stored on computer media, including those accessed from the internet, from time to time.
- 2.3.4 If an employee suspects that the system, including any of their files, has been accessed illegally or without authority, they should inform the Principal or Senior Leadership Member with responsibility for IT immediately.
- 2.3.5 Any abuse of the internet, including but not limited to excessive use, is treated as misconduct and will be dealt with through the disciplinary procedure.

#### 2.4 Use of Email and other Electronic Communication

- 2.4.1 Employees may send email messages for Federation purposes. Employees can therefore use the email to communicate with colleagues, students, parents, contacts and suppliers on Federation related issues only.
- 2.4.2 In addition, urgent or important serious messages may be sent to family or friends. This communication is allowed as a "privilege" in the same matter as occasional telephone calls.
- 2.4.3 Employees must avoid creating email congestion by sending trivial messages or copying emails unnecessarily unless it is for genuine urgent Federation reasons.
- 2.4.4 Employees must take great care with what they say in email messages. Improper statements can give rise to personal or Federation liability. Employees should always remember that email messages; however confidential or damaging, may have to be disclosed in Court proceedings or in investigations by other competent authorities/regulatory bodies. This applies to internal as well as external email messages.
- 2.4.5 Employees must *never* send email messages which are defamatory, obscene, pornographic, abusive, sexist or racist or which may amount to harassment or may cause offence on the grounds of disability, sexual orientation, age or religion or which may be discriminatory in any way. The sending of such email messages will be treated as gross misconduct which may result in summary dismissal.
- 2.4.6 The Federation recognises that employees cannot always control incoming mail. The Federation therefore reserves the right to monitor the content of email to screen sexually explicit or other offensive material. Email which is caught by this screening may be forwarded to the Principal. Any employee who is receiving such communication from known sources is responsible for contacting that source in order to request that it is not repeated. If the messages do not stop, then you should seek assistance from your immediate supervisor.
- 2.4.7 Employees should appreciate that email is relatively insecure and should consider the security and confidential needs of the recipient and all individuals mentioned in an email and/or any attachments before transmitting it. Confidential information should not be sent by email but should be sent in written form to the addressee in an appropriately marked and sealed envelope.
- 2.4.8 Emails and all electronic communication are covered by data protection legislation. Strict guidelines must therefore be followed when sending any communication from which it may be possible to identify a living individual.

- 2.4.9 Where important messages are sent by email, employees must obtain confirmation of receipt from the recipient.
- 2.4.10 Employees must not enter into binding contractual commitments by email unless they have been authorised to do so. Those employees who are authorised, may do so but should be constantly aware that contracts entered into in this manner are legally binding and that a hard copy of the contract should always be obtained. Such employees should take care when negotiating the terms of any contract that they do not create a legally binding contract unless they have proper authorisation and all terms have been approved.
- 2.4.11 Internal emails may be sent in an informal style but employees should observe the normal courtesy that they would extend in written memos. Emails sent externally should be written in an appropriate businesslike manner.
- 2.4.12 It is possible to introduce computer viruses into the Academies' ICT systems via the email system. Therefore, employees must never import files or programs onto their systems without first having them scanned for viruses. If you are in any doubt concerning any message or attachment received by email, you should contact your Academy's IT Systems Manager immediately. You should also inform the IT Systems Manager immediately if you suspect a virus has been accessed and must immediately stop using the system until you are informed you can resume.
- 2.4.13 Employees must not download, copy or transmit to third parties the files, programs, messages or other works of others without their prior permission as this may infringe their rights, including copyright.

## 2.5 Monitoring of use of email and the Internet

2.5.1 The Federation may intercept, monitor and record communications sent and received by email and the internet for the following purposes:

- Establishing the existence of facts.
- Ascertaining compliance with regulatory or self regulatory practices or procedures.
- Ascertaining or demonstrating standards which ought to be achieved by persons using the system.
- Preventing and detecting crime.
- Investigating or detecting unauthorised use of the system.
- Ensuring the effective operation of the system.
- Checking that communications are relevant to the business of the Federation.

When employees are absent from work, their emails may be checked for the purpose of ensuring the Federation responds to the emails appropriately.

## 3. Other Policies Relevant to this Policy

3.1 Social Networking: Staff should not enable students to view their personal profile (e.g. by accepting them as friends) on any social networking site due to the potential visibility of sensitive information. The relationship between staff and students is built upon a professional understanding and the Federation deems it inappropriate for staff and students to exchange personal information that may expose the staff member to potentially harmful allegations. Example: A student requesting you as a friend on Facebook should be refused.

- 3.2 Email and internet use may involve processing data which contains personal information about living individuals. Such data is covered by data protection legislation and employees should also refer to all data protection policies and guidance issued by the Federation when handling, storing or in any way processing such data.
- 3.3 As stated above, abuse of any internet, email and computer systems including any breach of these rules is potentially a very serious matter and may result in disciplinary action under the Federation's disciplinary procedure.
- 3.4 Employees who have a complaint regarding use of the email, internet or computer systems operated by the Federation should use the Federation's grievance procedure. If employees have concerns about emails from unknown sources, then they should seek the Federation's assistance to discover the source of the communication and then discuss the matter with their Head of Department.

#### **4. Telephone Communications**

##### 4.1 Telephone misuse

- 4.1.1 An Academy's telephone lines are for the exclusive use by employees in connection with the Academy's business. Whilst the Federation will tolerate essential personal telephone calls concerning an employee's domestic arrangements, excessive use of the telephone for personal calls is prohibited. This includes lengthy, casual chats and calls at premium rates. Not only does excessive time engaged on personal telephone calls lead to loss of productivity, it also constitutes an unauthorised use of the Federation's time. If an Academy discovers that the telephone has been used excessively for personal calls, this will be dealt with under the Federation's disciplinary procedure and the employee will be required to pay to the Federation the cost of personal calls made.