



Title: Email Access and Use Policy
Effective Date: June 5, 2005
Issuing Authority: Senior Vice President for Administration and Finance
Policy Contact: Assistant Vice President of Information Technology and Chief Information Officer, helpdesk@mercer.edu, 478-301-7000

Purpose

Email is a critical mechanism for communications at Mercer University. Use of Mercer's electronic mail systems and services is a privilege, not a right, and must be used with discretion and in accordance with the policies of the University. The objectives of this policy are to outline appropriate and inappropriate uses of Mercer's email systems and services in order to minimize disruptions to services and activities as well as to comply with relevant policies and laws.

Scope

This policy applies to all email systems and services owned or provided by Mercer University, all email users at Mercer University, and all Mercer University email records.

Exclusions

None

Policy Statement

Account Activation/Termination

Email access at Mercer University is controlled through individual accounts and passwords. Each user of Mercer University's email system is required to read and indicate their understanding of and agreement with this policy before they will be given an email account and password. It is the responsibility of the employee to protect the confidentiality of their account and password information.

All employees of Mercer University are entitled to an email account upon the approval of their immediate supervisor. Email accounts may be granted to third-party non-employees on a case-by-case basis. Requests for a temporary, non-employee account must be submitted in writing to HelpDesk@Mercer.edu.

Email access will be terminated when the employee or third party terminates their association with Mercer University unless other arrangements are made with and approved by Human Resources. Mercer University is under no obligation to store, forward, or provide copies of the

contents of any individual's email after the term of their employment or affiliation with Mercer has ceased.

General Expectations of End Users

Important official communications are often delivered via email. All email users are expected to check their email in a consistent and timely manner so that they are aware of important announcements and updates as well as for fulfilling business- and role-oriented tasks.

All email users are responsible for effectively managing their messages and folders on a regular basis. Messages and folders which are no longer needed should be deleted from the system. Messages which are required to be kept for historical records must be removed from the Inbox and stored in another folder.

The email system is not designed for or intended to be used as a records archival system. Excessive message retention on the server will cause continual degradation of email system performance, which impacts all users of the system. Email account holders will receive regular notification if their message retention reaches an excessive level. If a user fails to effectively manage their email messages and folders, Information Technology personnel will be required to move and/or delete messages as necessary.

Email storage quotas will be implemented as necessary to ensure adequate space for the Mercer community, to ensure system stability, and to maintain reasonable levels of system performance. Written requests and justification for additional storage space should be sent via email to HelpDesk@Mercer.edu.

Appropriate Use

Individuals at Mercer University are encouraged to use email to further the goals and objectives of the University. The types of activities that are encouraged include but are not limited to:

- Communicating with fellow employees, business partners of Mercer University, and clients within the context of an individual's assigned responsibilities.
- Acquiring or sharing information necessary or related to the performance of an individual's assigned responsibilities.
- Participating in educational, research, or professional development activities.

Inappropriate Use

Mercer University's email systems and services are not to be used for purposes that could be reasonably expected to cause excessive strain on systems. Individual email use must not interfere with others' use of Mercer University's email system and services. The following activities, including but not limited to, are deemed inappropriate uses of Mercer University systems and services and are prohibited:

- Use of email that in any way violates University policies.

- Use of email for illegal or unlawful purposes including, but not limited to, copyright infringement, obscenity, libel, slander, fraud, defamation, plagiarism, harassment, intimidation, forgery, impersonation, soliciting for illegal pyramid schemes, or computer tampering (e.g. spreading of computer viruses).
- Viewing, copying, altering, or deleting of email accounts or files belonging to Mercer University or another individual without authorized permission.
- Opening email attachments from unknown or unsigned sources. Attachments are the primary source of computer viruses and should be treated with utmost caution. All inbound and outbound email messages are scanned for viruses, worms, etc., but caution must still be used.
- Sharing email account passwords with another person or attempting to obtain another person's email account password. Email accounts are only to be used by the registered user.
- Excessive personal use of email or system resources. Mercer University allows limited personal use for communication with family and friends, independent learning, and public service so long as it does not interfere with staff productivity, pre-empt any business activity, or consume more than a trivial amount of resources. Mercer University prohibits personal use of its email systems and services for unsolicited mass mailings, commercial activity, political campaigning, dissemination of chain letters, and any other activities which might disrupt or prevent use by other system users.

Monitoring and Confidentiality

The email systems and services used at Mercer University are owned by the institution. This gives Mercer University the right to monitor any and all email traffic passing through its systems. While the IT staff does not actively read user's email, email messages may be inadvertently read by them during the normal course of managing the email system or providing support services.

Email should not be used to communicate confidential or sensitive information. Keep in mind that once an email message is sent, it becomes the property of the receiver. A good rule of thumb is to not communicate anything that you wouldn't feel comfortable being made public. Use particular care when using "Reply" and "Reply/All" during email correspondence.

In addition, backup copies of email messages may exist, despite end-user deletion, in compliance with Mercer University policy. The goals of backup and archiving procedures are to ensure system availability and to prevent business data loss. If Mercer University discovers or has good reason to suspect activities that do not comply with relevant laws or this policy, email records may be retrieved and used to document the activity as directed by the appropriate Mercer University authority.

Reporting Misuse

If you receive an email which violates Mercer University policy or relevant laws, do not forward, delete, or reply to the message. Instead, please contact the Information Technology Help Desk at HelpDesk@Mercer.edu.

Disclaimer

Mercer University assumes no liability for direct and/or indirect damages arising from the user's use of Mercer University's email system and services. Users are solely responsible for the content they disseminate. Mercer University is not responsible for any third-party claim, demand, or damage arising out of the use of Mercer University's email systems or services.

Failure to Comply

Violations of this policy will be treated in accordance with Mercer University policies, procedures, and all relevant federal, state, and local laws. Allegations of misconduct will be adjudicated according to established procedures. Sanctions for inappropriate use of Mercer University's email systems and services may include, but are not limited to, one or more of the following:

1. Temporary or permanent revocation of email access;
2. Disciplinary action according to Mercer University policies;
3. Termination of employment; and/or
4. Legal action according to relevant laws and contractual agreements.

Email User Agreement

I have read and understand the Email Acceptable Use Policy. I understand that if I violate the rules explained herein, I may face disciplinary or legal action according to Mercer University policies and/or relevant laws.

Website Address

Information Technology: <http://it.mercer.edu>

History

Approved by the Executive Vice President for Finance and Administration on December 1, 2008.
Revised June 5, 2025