

Email & Electronic Communications Policy

For Australian Small & Medium Enterprises

Template Version 1.0 | December 2024

Important Notice

This template provides general guidance on email and electronic communications use. It should be tailored to your organisation's specific needs and communication platforms. Consider privacy and monitoring laws when implementing.

1. Purpose

This policy establishes guidelines for the appropriate use of email and electronic communications at [Company Name]. It aims to ensure professional communication standards, protect company interests and comply with legal requirements.

2. Scope

This policy applies to:

- All employees, contractors and authorised users
- Company-provided email accounts and systems
- Instant messaging and collaboration platforms
- Video conferencing and online meetings
- SMS and text messaging for business purposes
- Social media communications on behalf of the company

3. General Principles

[Company Name] electronic communications systems are provided primarily for business purposes.

Users should:

- Use professional language and tone
- Be mindful that communications may be permanent records
- Consider the audience and appropriate medium
- Protect confidential information
- Comply with company policies and legal requirements

4. Email Use

4.1 Professional Standards

When using company email:

- Use clear, descriptive subject lines
- Address recipients professionally
- Proofread before sending
- Use appropriate signatures as required
- Respond to emails in a timely manner

4.2 Content Guidelines

- Keep messages concise and relevant
- Use appropriate formatting for readability
- Avoid using ALL CAPS (perceived as shouting)
- Be cautious with humour which may be misunderstood
- Do not send chain emails or spam

4.3 Attachments and Links

- Keep attachments to reasonable sizes
- Use secure file sharing for large files
- Do not open suspicious attachments or links
- Verify unexpected attachments from known senders

5. Instant Messaging and Collaboration Tools

5.1 Appropriate Use

- Use approved messaging platforms only
- Maintain professional conduct
- Be mindful of others' availability status
- Use appropriate channels for different topics

5.2 Group Communications

- Keep group discussions on topic
- Use @mentions appropriately
- Consider whether group or private message is appropriate
- Respect channel purposes and guidelines

6. Personal Use

[Company Name] permits limited personal use of electronic communications provided it:

- Does not interfere with work duties
- Is not excessive in time or frequency
- Does not incur significant costs
- Complies with all other policy requirements
- Does not create legal liability for the company

7. Prohibited Activities

The following are strictly prohibited:

- Sending or forwarding offensive, discriminatory or harassing content
- Distributing defamatory material
- Sharing confidential information without authorisation
- Sending sexually explicit material
- Engaging in illegal activities
- Impersonating others or using false identities
- Sending unsolicited bulk emails
- Interfering with other users' email

8. Confidentiality

8.1 Handling Confidential Information

- Do not send confidential information to personal email accounts
- Use encryption for sensitive communications where available
- Double-check recipients before sending confidential material
- Mark confidential emails appropriately

8.2 External Communications

- Consider what information is appropriate for external parties
- Obtain approval before sharing sensitive business information
- Include appropriate disclaimers on external emails
- Be aware of legal privilege and without prejudice communications

9. Email Etiquette

9.1 Carbon Copy (CC) and Blind Carbon Copy (BCC)

- CC individuals who need to be informed
- Avoid unnecessary CCs that create email overload

- Use BCC for large distribution lists to protect privacy
- Use Reply All judiciously

9.2 Out of Office

- Set automatic replies when away
- Include return date and alternative contact
- Keep messages professional

10. Record Keeping

Electronic communications may constitute business records:

- Emails may need to be retained for legal or business purposes
- Follow document retention policies
- Do not delete emails that may be required for legal proceedings
- Archive important communications appropriately

11. Monitoring

[Company Name] reserves the right to monitor electronic communications:

- For legitimate business purposes
- To ensure compliance with policies
- To protect company systems and information
- As required by law

Users should have no expectation of privacy when using company systems.

12. Security

12.1 Phishing and Scams

- Be alert to phishing attempts
- Do not click on suspicious links
- Report suspected phishing emails to IT
- Verify unexpected requests, especially for payments or information

12.2 Account Security

- Do not share email passwords
- Lock workstation when away
- Log out of shared devices
- Report suspected account compromise immediately

13. Legal Considerations

Employees should be aware that:

- Emails can be used as evidence in legal proceedings
- Defamatory statements may create personal and company liability
- Contracts can be formed via email
- Copyright applies to electronic content
- Privacy laws apply to personal information

14. Responsibilities

14.1 Employees

- Comply with this policy
- Maintain professional standards
- Report security incidents
- Protect confidential information

14.2 Managers

- Ensure team awareness of policy
- Model appropriate behaviour
- Address policy breaches

15. Breaches

Breaches of this policy may result in:

- Restriction or removal of email privileges
- Disciplinary action
- Termination of employment for serious breaches
- Legal action where appropriate

16. Review

This policy will be reviewed:

- At least annually
- When communication tools change
- When legal requirements change

Employee Acknowledgement

I acknowledge that I have read and understood [Company Name]'s Email & Electronic Communications Policy. I understand the expectations for professional communication and agree to comply with this policy.

Employee Name: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____