

# INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY, TALLAGHT

## POLICY ON THE USE OF EMAIL

### Introduction

Electronic (E) mail enables members of Institute of Technology Tallaght (IT Tallaght) community (staff, students and alumni) to communicate promptly and efficiently with colleagues internally within the organisation and enables a prompt and efficient service from IT Tallaght to its members and associates. Email can also be used to communicate with other individuals and organisations with which Institute members interact. While email brings many benefits to IT Tallaght in terms of its communication both internally with members and externally, it also brings risks to the organisation, particularly where members use it outside of their Institute roles. It also brings risks where members also have more general access to the Internet. It is therefore necessary to have a code of practice that regulates the use of email. Every member has a responsibility to maintain the Institute's image, to use these electronic resources in a productive and responsible manner and to avoid placing the Institute at risk for legal liability based on their use.

### Preamble

The purpose of this policy is to ensure the proper use of Institute of Technology Tallaght's email system. All messages distributed via the Institute's email system, even personal emails, are IT Tallaght's property. If there is evidence that you are not adhering to the guidelines set out in this policy, the Institute reserves the right to take disciplinary action, including termination and/or legal action. If you have any questions or comments about this Email Policy, please contact your Head of School/Department or Function Head.

### Main issues with email

Although the issues are covered within the policy there are a number of important aspects to email. Email must be regarded in the same sense and with the same care as any other written communication. Once sent it cannot be recalled. Inadvertent or inappropriate use of multiple addressees can create exposures which are unique to email as opposed to ordinary written communication. Personal rights may be infringed. Persons and organisations outside the Institute could act on the basis of inappropriate emails and expose the Institute to significant risk. Emails can be intercepted and altered in transit.

### Use of Email

Email is an efficient, computerised communication system, which enables the sending, and receiving of messages between members and between the Institute and its clients/customers/suppliers. Documents and materials can be attached to emails. The Email can effectively by-pass typewritten documents, faxes and the need to post documents.

There are however risks attached to the sending of emails and they are:

1. Messages may go to persons other than the intended recipient and if confidential or commercially sensitive, this could be damaging to you or the Institute.
2. Email messages can carry computer viruses that are particularly dangerous to IT Tallaght's computer operations generally.

3. Letters, files and other documents attached to emails may belong to others and there may be copyright implications in sending or receiving them without permission.
4. Email is speedy and, as such, messages written in haste or written carelessly are sent simultaneously and without the opportunity to check or rephrase. This could give rise to legal liability on the Institute's part, such as claims for defamation, etc.
5. An email message may legally bind IT Tallaght contractually in certain instances without the proper authority being obtained internally.
6. It should be remembered that all personal data contained in emails may be accessible under Data Protection Legislation and, furthermore, a substantial portion of emails to Government and other public bodies may be accessible under Freedom of Information legislation.
7. Emails should be regarded as potentially public information, which carry a heightened risk of legal liability for the sender, the recipient and the organisations for which they work.

### Rules for Email Use

The rules for email use apply to any person who has been authorised to send email from the Institute.

In order to avoid or reduce the risks inherent in the use of email within IT Tallaght the following rules are necessary: -

1. "@it-tallaght" is included in the address of every member of the Institute. All messages sent by members reflect on IT Tallaght's image and reputation. Therefore, email messages must be appropriate and professional.
2. Great care should be taken when attaching documents. It is increasingly easy to download files from the Internet or 'cut and paste' materials from electronic sources. This increases the risks of infringement of the rights of others, particularly intellectual property rights. Attaching documents may also give rise to the release of information not intended, hence the importance of vetting attachments. If in doubt please consult your Head of School/Department or Function Head.
3. Extra caution needs to be taken in composing email messages with respect to any disparaging remarks that may be contained therein. An email should be regarded as a written formal letter, the recipients of which may be many more than the sender originally intended. Hence, any defamatory or careless remarks can have very serious consequences as can any indirect innuendo.
4. If you receive any offensive, unpleasant, harassing or intimidating messages via email you are requested to inform your Head of School/Department or Function Head and the Computer Services Department immediately. It is important that we trace such emails as quickly as possible.
5. Do not subscribe to electronic services or other contracts on behalf of IT Tallaght unless you have the express authority to do so. Authority for subscriptions, including electronic subscriptions such as these rest with authorised personnel and unless you are one of those delegated persons you have no authority to enter into commitment that is binding on IT Tallaght via email or the Internet.
6. Any important or potentially contentious communication, which you have received by email, should be printed and a hard copy kept (e.g. confirmation of an order etc.) Where important to do so you should obtain confirmation that the recipient has received your email.
7. Documents prepared by IT Tallaght for members and associates may be attached to email messages. However, excerpts from reports other than IT Tallaght's may be in breach of copyright and the author's consent should be obtained, particularly where material is taken out of its original context. Information received from one

- person should not be released to another person without prior consent of the original sender.
8. IT Tallaght reserves and intends to exercise the right to review, audit, intercept, access and disclose all messages created, received or sent over the electronic mail system for any purpose.
  9. IT Tallaght strongly encourages users to manage their mail accounts efficiently and discourages storage of large numbers of email messages (*see extract from the Institute's Records Management Policy*). As a general rule, users should promptly delete each email message that is received after it has been read. If it is necessary to keep a message for longer than a week, it should be saved to your local file storage, or printed out and deleted.
  10. Notwithstanding the Institute's right to retrieve and read any electronic mail messages, such messages should be treated as confidential by other employees and accessed only by the intended recipient. Employees are not authorised to retrieve or read email messages that are not sent to them. Any exception to this policy must receive prior approval from the Institute. However, the confidentiality of any message should not be assumed. Even when a message is erased it is still possible to retrieve and read that message.

#### It is strictly prohibited to:

- Send or forward emails containing **libellous, defamatory, indecent, obscene, sexist, racist, political or other inappropriate remarks/comments/jokes whether in written form or otherwise**. If you receive an email of this nature, you must promptly notify your Head of School/Department or Function Head.
- Forward a message or copy a message or attachment belonging to another user without acquiring permission from the originator first.
- Send unsolicited email messages or chain mail.
- Forge or attempt to forge email messages, or disguise or attempt to disguise your identity when sending mail.

#### Duty of care

Users must take the same care in drafting an email as they would for any other communication. Confidential information should not be sent via email.

#### Personal Usage

Although the Institute's email system is meant for business use, IT Tallaght allows personal usage if it is reasonable and does not interfere with work.

#### Disclaimer

*The following disclaimer will be appended to all email messages sent from the Institute: 'The information transmitted is the property of Institute of Technology, Tallaght. It is possible for data transmitted by email to be deliberately or accidentally corrupted or intercepted. For this reason, where the communication is by email, Institute of Technology Tallaght does not accept any responsibility for any breach of confidence which may arise through the use of this medium. Institute of Technology Tallaght sweeps emails for computer viruses known to it at the date of transmission'.*

All members of staff of Institute of Technology must act in accordance with this policy as failure to do so may result in disciplinary or legal action.

*Extracts from IT Tallaght's Records Management Policy..*

**Emails**

All emails are Institute records not private records. They can be retrieved in the collection of records for scheduling by a Decision Maker, as defined in the Freedom Of Information Acts, 1997 and 2003. Staff members are encouraged to control their individual volume of emails by periodically deleting non-essential materials e.g. copies of minutes, or other information available elsewhere, diary events, unsolicited emails from external sources and inconsequential personal matters. However, emails which fall within the definition of perpetual records under the FOI Acts are maintained whether within the staff members allotted space or centrally archived.

Email is potentially a record as its content usually concerns official business. It is therefore accessible under the Freedom of Information Acts, 1997 and 2003.

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*IT Tallaght reserves the right to amend or withdraw any policy in the light of developments in best practice, consultation with affected parties and changes in the legal environment.*