The University of Texas at Austin

University Electronic Mail Student Notification Policy (Use of E-mail for Official Correspondence to Students)

Office of the Chief Information Officer

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1. Policy Statement

Electronic mail (e-mail), like postal mail, is a mechanism for official University communication to students. The University will exercise the right to send e-mail communications to all students, and the University will expect that e-mail communications will be received and read in a timely manner.

2. Scope

This policy applies to all admitted and enrolled students of The University of Texas at Austin. Official communications using e-mail can include e-mail to a group, such as all admitted students, or an e-mail message to only one student.

3. E-mail Addresses

Every student must provide the University with his or her official e-mail address using the [online update form in UT Direct](#). The student's official e-mail address is the destination to which the University will send official e-mail communications.

It is the responsibility of every student to keep the University informed of changes in his or her official e-mail address. Consequently, e-mail returned to the University with "User Unknown" is not an acceptable excuse for missed communication.

All admitted and enrolled students may [claim an e-mail address](#) at no additional cost as provided by Information Technology Services. ITS is responsible for providing centrally supported e-mail servers and addresses that assist the University in sending official communications.

The University cannot be responsible for the handling of e-mail by outside vendors (e.g., @aol.com, @hotmail.com) or by University departmental servers. A student may provide an official e-mail address resident on, or that forwards to, such a server at his or her own risk.

4. Expectations Regarding Frequency of Reading E-mail

Students are expected to check e-mail on a frequent and regular basis in order to stay current with University-related communications, recognizing that certain communications may be time-critical. It is recommended that e-mail be checked daily, but at a minimum, twice per week. Regular e-mail management will also minimize the risk that the inbox will be full, causing the e-mail to be returned to the sender with an error. Undeliverable messages returned because of either a full inbox or use of a "spam" filter will be considered delivered without further action required of the University.

5. Privacy and Confidentiality

Official University communications sent by e-mail are subject to the same public information, privacy and records retention requirements and policies as other official University communications.

6. Instructional Uses of E-mail

Faculty members retain autonomy in determining how e-mail or other forms of electronic communication will be used in their classes, but must specify the requirements in the course syllabus. Faculty may expect that students are checking e-mail regularly, and faculty may use e-mail for their courses accordingly.

7. Authoritative Source

The authoritative source on this policy and responsibility for its implementation rests with the Chief Information Officer.

8. For Assistance

Contact the ITS Help Desk for technical support at 512-475-9400 (or send e-mail to the ITS Help Desk).

9. Questions Regarding the Policy on E-mail as an Official Form of Communication

9.1. Why has the University adopted a policy of using e-mail as an official means of communication?

Most of us now use e-mail for a variety of purposes. E-mail is rapidly becoming the preferred means of conveying information quickly and using minimal resources. The speed, efficiency and low cost of e-mail will improve communications and reduce costs, resulting in important benefits to the University and its students. This policy is already in effect at many colleges and universities around the nation, and will go into effect at the University in Fall 2004.

9.2. What is the meaning of "e-mail as an official means of communication?"

The University will consider the use of e-mail in communicating with students to be an effective alternative to the use of land mail or telephones. The choice of the means of communication, e-mail or otherwise, will depend upon the nature of the message and the method deemed most appropriate by the University agency or faculty member initiating the communication. It is likely that many of the communications students have received by land mail in the past will now come via e-mail.

9.3. How will I know that an e-mail message is an authentic, official University communication?

We strongly encourage you to evaluate the contents of every communication before taking any irrevocable actions. E-mail in many cases is not automatically verifiable, but this is no different from a phone call or a letter. So if the contents seem unusual, we recommend you take additional steps to verify the correspondence.

E-mail that is sent via group mail contains a digital signature that allows recipients to verify that the message they are reading is not a forgery. To determine the authenticity of such a message, please see check the Digital Signatures page.

9.4. Will I be required to use an e-mail address assigned by the University, or will I be allowed to use a third-party address?

The University does not assign e-mail addresses to students. You may claim one at no extra charge. Whatever address you choose, you can register your preferred e-mail address.

While we encourage you to use one of the ITS e-mail services, you may register an e-mail address that is located on another University computer or on a third-party service. However, if you do so, you are fully responsible to make sure that you are getting all of your e-mail, and in a timely way.

If you use multiple e-mail services but prefer to receive all your mail in one location, you may forward your University e-mail to another server. Again, you are fully responsible for making sure you are receiving all of your e-mail.

9.5. How can filtering affect my receipt of e-mail?

Many people use desktop spam filters or subscribe to an e-mail service that implements these filters. In all such cases you are responsible for making sure that you are receiving your e-mail from the University, including from your professors. Most University e-mail coming to you will come from an address that ends in utexas.edu, but occasionally your professor or other University persons or agencies may be using another service.

The University has requested that major Internet service providers "allow-list" e-mail coming from mail.utexas.edu, austin.utexas.edu and utlists.utexas.edu. If these services agree to do so, they will place University e-mail addresses we specify on a list of addresses that are deemed spam- or virus-free. To date (October 2004) Austin Road Runner, AOL and Yahoo have agreed. Even on these services, if you are using client-based filtering, you need to make sure you are getting all of your University e-mail.

9.6. Will technical assistance be available if I need help with this policy?

Yes. For technical assistance, contact the [ITS Help Desk](#) or (512) 475-9400.

9.7. Will freshmen and transfer students receive information and training regarding this policy during orientation?

ITS will include this information in all of our orientation sessions. Additionally, you can read [the policy](#) itself.

9.8. How will new graduate students, who have no university-wide orientation program, receive information and training?

[The policy](#) is available on the ITS web site. Also, any faculty, staff or student may contact the [ITS Help Desk](#) at (512) 475-9400 for assistance. ITS will also send e-mail notices to all students to provide information about this policy. During fall 2004 ITS will determine who has not registered an e-mail address with the University. Students who have not done so will be contacted by land mail indicating that they must provide an e-mail address for use by the University.

9.9. How will the policy affect me if I don't have Internet access during holidays or the summer?

There are always going to be cases when someone is not available by normal communications methods. Internet access is now like phone and postal service, so it would be the same as if the University tried to call you or send you a letter and you were unreachable through either of those methods.

9.10. What are the potential consequences if I fail to receive an official e-mail from The University because of spam filters or failure to provide a working e-mail address?

The consequences would be the same as if you did not receive University information through regular mail or any other form of communication. For example, if you do not receive a tuition bill sent by e-mail and you fail to pay by a specified date, your class schedule may be canceled. Likewise, failure to receive e-mail containing information regarding availability of financial aid, information about registration and class schedules, updates on University closings during emergencies, or other important University services will have the same consequence as if that information were sent by another method of communication besides e-mail, and for some reason the information did not reach you. As mentioned above, you are fully responsible for making sure you are receiving all of your e-mail from the University.

10. Revision History

Version	Date	New	Original
University Electronic Mail Student Notification Policy (Use of E-mail for Official Correspondence to Students)	3/3/2011	Converted web page to PDF	No change

11. Approvals

Name	Role	Members	Date
	Approval		5/17/2004