



King's College

DOHA

Communication Policy and Guidance

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King's College Doha operates in a fast paced and, at times, highly pressured environment, in which email is accepted as one of the primary methods of communication used daily. Email may even be the best way to communicate a particular message, but in an age of digital information 'overload', all staff should be mindful of the impact of an excessively email-driven culture and make smart choices about what, when and how to communicate with others.

With many individuals now accessing emails across multiple personal and work devices, it is increasingly important to use email appropriately in a way that fosters productivity and efficiency whilst enabling staff to manage a reasonable work-life balance.

It is also important that staff are aware of how best to use emails to enhance instead of hinder working practices and relationships with others, to be sure our communication choices are improving the quality of the working environment at King's College Doha.

Guidance aims

This guidance covers all staff at King's College Doha and sets out what is considered acceptable standards in relation to the use of emails between staff and others. This includes internal correspondents, i.e. colleagues, team members, pupils, administration staff, and those external to the school, such as parents or outside providers.

This guidance focuses on email principles and etiquette.

Email communication is highly beneficial for speed, minimal cost and convenience. Emails are a formal written form of communication that are covered by several laws, meaning they can be used for legal purposes - so be careful what is written.

Although it is often regarded as such, email should not be considered an informal method of speaking with others when dealing with King's College Doha business, despite it being a fast and easy way of communicating. It is also important that it is recognised by all staff that intensive use or overuse of email can result in negatively impacting recipients in several ways.

Excessive or inappropriate use of email, or emails with an excessive amount of unnecessary content, can result in 'information overload', where an individual feels overwhelmed by the volume of emails received. This can lead to several negative outcomes such as stress, anxiety, miscommunication, indecision, or poor decision-making, procrastination and other counter-productive avoidance behaviours, although this is not an exhaustive list.

As such, wherever possible face-to-face communication should always be the first and best option, particularly when communication is made on potentially difficult or potentially confusing matters.

Fostering good working relationships

When sending emails, senders should always be aware of their audience. In doing so it is important to keep any relevant dynamics in mind, i.e. with senior staff emailing colleagues, what may seem to the sender as a request or suggestion may be interpreted as a directive by the recipient(s). Equally, what one may consider a reasonable tone may easily cause offence to another. Staff should ensure that care and attention are taken with email correspondence, just as it would be with a written letter, to reduce the chance of misinterpretation and misunderstanding. The 'Bcc' option should generally not be used in the interest of disclosure and full transparency of communications to all parties, both sender and recipient. Using Bcc may be appropriate or even necessary within bulk emails, to prevent the disclosure of recipient's emails or avoid 'reply all' errors, but the opening salutation must then make it clear whom the email has been sent to.

Each email should start with 'Dear' and end with a sign-off such as 'regards' and name and contain professional language rather than slang or similar abbreviations.

Email software

Your school email address should be used for all school communication. The email signature needs to be configured so that it looks the same, i.e. font type and size, school logo and contact details, your job designation and standard disclaimer.

There will be occasions during the year when you will want to email parents, either as a form, year group or individually. Please **always** use iSAMS and not Outlook for this, if you want a record of the conversation kept under the pupil's communication history.

Use the Pupil Management module and then Pupil Manager. Search for the form/year/pupil. You can also email academic sets by using the Academic tab rather than the Basic tab.

To select a pupil/group of pupils tick the box(es) to the left of the names. Do not click on a pupil's name to open their record. To select the whole list, click the box to the left of where it says Pupil's Name (Pre Name) at the top. Once you've selected a pupil/group of pupils select **Email Wizard** from the dropdown pink menu which is nearly at the bottom of the list. Tick **Contacts for the selected pupils** and then the next steps as to which contact you want. You can add an attachment using the appropriate tab and then send the email.

If you receive an email from a parent, you can cut and paste it into the Notes section of the iSAMS pupil's record as well as your reply if you feel it is useful to keep a record of it. You can see what emails have been sent to the parent through iSAMS by looking at Communication History>email from a pupil's record within **Pupil Manager**.

Emails out of hours

Owing to the nature of some roles at the school, and the range of locations these may be undertaken, emails sent outside of working hours will sometimes be both normal and necessary. For many other roles across the school out of hours emails should be the exception rather than the rule.

Emails sent outside of working hours can alleviate the sender's workload, particularly as teaching loads and/or other intensive periods of meetings and commitments are predominantly set within working hours or can be convenient where travel is required. With technology allowing staff to access emails via mobiles, tablets, and laptops while on the move, the boundary between professional and personal arenas can also become increasingly blurred.

Whilst it is the prerogative of the sender to send an email whenever they choose, it is also the recipient's prerogative to choose when to read their incoming emails (i.e. normally within working hours), provided this is in line with the accepted levels of professional behaviour and aligned with the expectations of their role responsibilities.

There should be no general expectation that staff will read emails out of hours. It is also advised where an urgent response is needed, a follow-up by telephone may be more appropriate than a "chaser" email. Senders should also be mindful of the impact on others when sending lots of emails out of hours, even if the sender does not expect a swift response. Arriving to work to a full "inbox" unexpectedly can be a stressor to recipients who may be deluged by emails both inside and outside of working hours. Microsoft Office (non-Mac) does allow for the sender to delay the sending of the email until after a designated time, allowing the sender to compose and 'send' the email but preventing the message from leaving the outbox until a later time.

Confidentiality

Emails should never be viewed as confidential unless secured by appropriate software.

All King's College Doha, emails sent should have the following footer:

DISCLAIMER: This email and any files transmitted with it are confidential and intended solely for the intended recipient. If you are not the named addressee you should not disseminate, distribute, copy or alter this email. If you have received this email in error, please notify the originator of the message immediately. Any views or opinions presented in this email are solely of the author and may not represent those of King's College Doha.

WARNING: Although King's College Doha has taken reasonable precautions to ensure no viruses are present in this email, the company cannot accept liability for any loss or damage arising from the use of this email or attachments.

Tackling problems

Where staff feel that colleagues are not making efforts to abide by the contents of this guidance, it is reasonable to:

- Speak with the person who sent the email - ideally in person or by phone - reminding them about the principles within this guidance and encouraging them to follow its advice. All staff should aim to support and remind each other of the importance of respecting boundaries and working in a professional and efficient manner. However, entering into email discussion about the appropriateness of emails is rarely to be encouraged.
- Speak to your line manager and/or the relevant Head of School in the first instance for a second opinion on email content and further advice if necessary, if you feel it to be inappropriate.

- Try applying a degree of professional empathy to the message sent and consider whether you could be 'reading too much into it'. Feedback to the sender may still be necessary but taking a step back and considering whether the issue is typical in your experience of an individual may separate a 'one-off' from a more serious issue.
- Any unprofessional, defamatory, or grossly unacceptable emails may result in disciplinary procedures.

'Rule of Thumb' email guidance

In terms of what is currently considered good practice:

- If a parent emails regarding an issue, reply the same day wherever possible. At the very least you must send a response thanking the parent for their email and informing them when you will respond to their query in more detail and giving this timeframe of doing so.
- Never write something in an email that you would not be prepared to say to someone's face
- Make sure you know each person's area of responsibility before adding to an email
- Never put more than one name in the 'To' box in an email if the email requires direct action from one person (such as proofreading a letter) – doing so leads to confusion as recipients will not know who should be actioning/replying to the email. This leads to wasted time by all parties.
- Consider whether an email is the most effective method of communicating your message. It may be more productive to have a quick meeting or phone call followed up with one summary email to confirm discussions (if necessary).
- Remain respectful, always treating others with dignity
- Do not expect a reply from anyone that you email unless you specifically ask for one, i.e. 'please let me know your thoughts/get back to me asap/what do you think?'
- Always start and end an email correctly and politely whenever possible – 'Dear ..' and 'Regards..'
- Write all email messages in a professional manner. Whilst the written style may sometimes differ, the general content of a work email should be consistent with other forms of written communication.
- Keep emails short and to the point wherever possible. This will be beneficial for all dealing with large numbers of emails and assist recipients working remotely on tablets or mobiles.
- Re-read emails before sending from the perspective of the recipient(s). Ensure your communication is clear, in relation to the positioning of instructions within the body of the message, highlighting clearly required actions. Where 'no action' is necessary and where the email is only for information, this should be stated.
- Do not leave the subject line blank
- Do not use under any circumstances any swear words
- The tone of the email should not be aggressive in nature and make accusations
- Ensure appropriate use of cc and whether all participants of an email need to continue to be cc'd or included in an email trail when the topic deviates to another issue
- Be extremely cautious in the use of bcc, ensuring that decisions to do so would meet the standards of this document, particularly with regard to integrity and transparency.
- Cc (carbon copy) is for information-only purposes, meaning that you should not expect a reply from a cc recipient.
- Do not cc a person into an email just because they hold a position of responsibility at King's College Doha – only cc them if they need to know about your email content and it is important
- Use bcc (blind carbon copy) when pasting in group email addresses for parent/staff emails where you do not want each recipient to see each other's email address
- Try to minimise the use of graphics, different fonts, and formats stored within a document when sending it as an attachment to an email

- Be extremely careful when sending emails containing personal or confidential information
- Check the recipient’s name, especially if there is more than one person with the same name or where a person uses more than one email address
- Before commencing writing an email on a sensitive topic, consider talking confidentially in person or by phone instead. If there is a possibility that the email will be misconstrued, misunderstood or intercepted, it is probably best avoided
- Do not expect others to wade through extensively long email trails to pick up important information you wish them to be aware of
- Where the content of an extended email trail has changed direction or purpose be mindful of continuing to forward excessively long email trails to others or continuing to include others as either ‘to’ or ‘cc’ recipients unnecessarily
- Avoid using bold, coloured or uppercase text unless completely appropriate and necessary for particular emphasis (e.g. acronyms or initials of names), as this is often interpreted as electronic ‘shouting’
- Be careful when using humour or sarcasm within an email as this can be easily misinterpreted
- It is accepted that emails may be prepared and sent outside of normal working hours, however, it should be fully expected that the recipient will not read, let alone reply, before the next working day commences
- Automated ‘out of office’ notifications can be used to manage expectations for both the recipient and sender of emails (e.g. by explaining the time of return to work following a period of time off work, period of back-to-back meetings, exam times etc.). Where possible it is helpful to ensure an appropriate signposted alternative is suggested.
- Do not write in red in an email to exaggerate a point you are trying to convey – doing so may be considered to be aggressive by the recipient.

Policy History

Date of adoption of this policy	September 2023
Date of last review of this policy	August 2023
Date for next review of this policy	August 2024
Policy owner (SLT)	Principal
Policy owner (Board)	Chair