Emails and records management

Email is the most common form of written communication used by staff at the University.

We use it for everything from informal ‘conversations’ (e.g. ‘we’ll be meeting in room G36, I’ll be along shortly’) to formal correspondence around areas such as procurement, personnel and governance. We use it to communicate via distribution lists to groups of students, subscribers and alumni. Messages arrive all the time and it is often a challenge to manage our inbox, meaning there is a risk that important emails can get lost or deleted.

The following, based on the principles of the University's Records Management Policy, outlines some key messages around emails as University records. It should be read in tandem with ULCC’s tips for using Outlook and HR’s guidance on how to use emails efficiently.

**Emails can be important records**

Records are the evidence of our decisions and actions at the University. Therefore our emails can constitute important University records.

**Email is a format rather than a type of record**

Email is a format / media on which records are created - some are of no importance, but some emails are records of decision making, purchasing or advising and need to kept according to the University’s retention schedule.

**Keeping emails forever is not an option**

For both storage and legal purposes, keeping every email is not an option. Server space is not limitless and inbox sizes can affect performance. If we hold emails containing personal data, the University needs to ensure that are not in breach of the 5th principle of the Data Protection Act 1998, which requires personal data to be held for no longer than necessary.

**You may have to release emails you have written under FOI or DPA**

Emails may be required for public disclosure as part of a Freedom of Information request or to an individual as part of a Subject Access Request under the Data Protection Act.
Use subfolders in Outlook to organise the emails you’d like to keep

Take important emails from your inbox and store in sub-folders as you work; this will make it easier to identify the important emails when it comes to tidying your inbox. See ULCC’s helpful user guide on how to do this.

Be careful when sending sensitive information by email

The confidentiality of email cannot be guaranteed and staff should take extra care when sending personal data or sensitive information. Password protected attachments can be used.

When staff leave the University they should transfer important email records to their team

When members of staff leave the organisation, managers should ensure that any important emails are moved either to subfolders in a generic email or passed to the line manager. The individual email account the email account may then be deleted.

Store personal emails appropriately

The ‘Acceptable use’ policy allows for ‘reasonable personal use’. Ensure that these emails, if they need to be kept, are dragged into a subfolder called ‘personal’.

@london.ac.uk Emails are the property of the University

Email addresses or accounts associated with the University are the property of the University of London.