

Mass Email Guidelines

University of Western Ontario

ITS Email Working Group
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Preamble

These guidelines apply to the use of University email systems for sending and distributing mass email communications.

The University of Western Ontario provides electronic mail services for use by students, faculty, staff and other persons affiliated with the University. The University email system is a vital part of the University's information technology services infrastructure. It is a service provided to support necessary communication in conducting and administering the business of the University, including teaching, research and scholarly activities. Refer to [Policy 1.45, E-mail Policy](#).

Information Technology Services (ITS) has received an increased number of requests to accommodate distribution of mass emails. Distributing mass emails causes an increased consumption of computing and networking resources which are shared by all users.

These guidelines aim to outline best practices, policies and processes for the effective use of mass email at The University of Western Ontario. These guidelines attempt to strike a balance between the speed and ease of use (for the sender) of mass email, the desire to reduce reliance on paper mail and the impact on each member of the community receiving unsolicited email messages. These guidelines have been developed in the interest of fairness, respect for personal time and effective use of University resources.

Definition of Mass Email

For the purposes of these guidelines, mass email shall be considered to be any unsolicited electronic mailing in which the message is sent to members of the University or affiliates in a bulk fashion.

Mailing Lists

Discussion amongst members of a mailing list is not generally considered mass email. However, the use of a mailing list for distributing mass email does not provide an exemption from these guidelines. List Guardian lists are not intended to be used for distributing mass emails.

Internet Spam

These guidelines do not attempt to regulate the abundance of “spam” emails originating from the internet.

Acceptable Content

Mass email messages must pertain to University business and shall conform to [Policy 1.45, E-mail Policy](#) and [Policy 1.13, Acceptable Use Policy](#).

Examples of unacceptable messages include:

1. Personal messages
2. Items for sale
3. Jokes
4. Chain letters
5. Pyramid or money-making schemes
6. Unsolicited commercial email
7. Political campaigning

The information conveyed should be of significant value to the recipients.

Focused Recipients

The distribution list must be refined in order to ensure the message is delivered only to those for whom it is relevant. The sender of the message is responsible for defining the distribution list as accurately as possible. When appropriate, use smaller and more targeted mailing lists rather than larger, broader lists. Recipients that no longer exist or have been disabled must be removed from future mailings to minimize bounces.

Message Format

1. Keep mass email messages short and message size small. Contact ITS before sending messages larger than 50 KB.
2. Use plain-text when possible. If using HTML, include a plain-text MIME part.
3. Always use a clear, descriptive and non-empty *Subject: header*.
4. Always use a valid and deliverable envelope “*mail from*” address to receive bounce messages.
5. Always use a valid and deliverable “*From: header*” address to receive replies from recipients of the mass email.
 - i. If the address in the *From: header* is not the intended recipient of replies, a valid and deliverable address should be specified in the *Reply-To: header*.
6. For messages addressed to multiple recipients, the recipient list must be protected. Do not include the recipient list in the *To: or Cc: headers* where it would be visible to all recipients. Use the *Bcc: header* or use a mailing list.
7. Do not include attachments; provide a URL link to download content instead.
8. Do not include personal, confidential or sensitive information.
9. Clearly identify the unit or individual responsible for sending the message, the scope of individuals being mass emailed, and the purpose of the message.
10. Contact information of the sender must be included. This may be in the *Reply-To: or From: headers*, or may be provided in the body of the message.
11. Directions for an opt-out process must be included at the bottom of the message as described in the “Opt-Out Process” section.

See Appendix 1 for a sample mass email message.

Opt-Out Process

Mass email messages shall include a way for recipients to opt-out of receiving further mass emails from the sender. Clear and simple instructions for opting-out must be included at the bottom of each mass email message. It is the sender's responsibility to comply with opt-out requests for further mailings within three business days of receiving the request.

The opt-out process does not apply to the following classifications of mass emails:

1. Official emails from University administration or their representatives.
2. Emergency emails concerning an immediate threat to health and safety, property or research.
3. Emails that the recipient would expect to receive as essential to their roles as students or employees.

Scheduling and Sending Rate

In order to minimize the impact that mass email messages have on University email and network systems, the following time-of-day and rate limits apply.

During Peak-Hours

Between 6am and 6pm on Mondays to Fridays, the following restrictions apply:

1. Mass emails may be sent to no more than 10,000 recipients.
2. When sending mass emails to more than 3,000 recipients, schedule the mailing in the events calendar at least 2 hours in advance and for a time that does not conflict with an existing scheduled mass email. See “Mass Mailing Communications Events Calendar” below.
3. The sender must control the rate of sending such that messages are sent to no more than 100 recipients per minute.

During Off-Hours

Outside of 6am to 6pm on Mondays to Fridays, all day on Saturdays, Sundays and Holidays, the following restrictions apply:

1. Mass emails may be sent to no more than 50,000 recipients without prior approval from ITS.
2. When sending mass emails to more than 3,000 recipients, schedule the mailing in the events calendar at least 2 hours in advance and for a time that does not conflict with an existing scheduled mass email. See “Mass Mailing Communications Events Calendar” below.
3. The sender must control the rate of sending such that messages are sent to no more than 100 recipients per minute.

Mass Mailing Communications Events Calendar

Mass emails are scheduled in the “Mass Mailing Communications” Events Calendar. When scheduling a mass emailing, ensure that no conflict is created with an already scheduled mass mailing.

When booking a mass mailing in the Events Calendar, ensure that appropriate time is reserved when considering number of recipients and the sending rate described above. As an example, to send a mass email to 15000 recipients, given the 100 recipients per minute limit, 2.5 hours should be reserved in the calendar.

The “Mass Mailing Communications” Events Calendar is located at:

[http://events.uwo.ca/cgi-bin/events.pl?
Op=ShowIt&CalendarName=MassMailCommunications](http://events.uwo.ca/cgi-bin/events.pl?Op=ShowIt&CalendarName=MassMailCommunications)

For access to schedule mailings in the Events Calendar, please contact the ITS Help Desk (web: <http://www.uwo.ca/its/helpdesk/> phone: 519-661-3800 or Ext 83800).

Spam Filters

The University email system employs spam and content filters to protect against spam and other unwanted messages. Mass email sent from outside of the University network will be filtered for spam before being delivered.

It is the responsibility of the sender to ensure their sending email servers are configured appropriately and that their email messages are formatted and delivered such that they will not be filtered as spam.

The University is not responsible for any mass emails that are filtered as spam and will not make any exceptions or “whitelist” any senders to allow emails through unfiltered. This applies to all solicited and unsolicited emails.

Noncompliance and Sanctions

Use of University computing and networking resources for sending mass email is subject to these guidelines, as well as the Email Policy and other University policies.

Reports of incidents regarding inappropriate mass email communications as they pertain to these guidelines should be referred to the Network Security Officer (email: nso@uwo.ca).

The University reserves the right to deny or remove access privileges to individuals or groups in order to protect the University computing and networking resources against excessive use or activity at the discretion of the system or network administrators, in accordance with [Policy 1.45, E-mail Policy](#).

As email is a privilege extended to the University community to facilitate communication, it should be used ethically and within bounds of policy.

Revisions

These guidelines are based on best practices, applicable law and technical capabilities at the time of the latest revision and will be updated periodically as technology and other factors change.

Appendix 1

A sample mass email message.

```
Return-path: <roadwork-bounces@uwo.ca>
Message-ID: <49D24564.3080802@uwo.ca>
Date: Tue, 31 Mar 2009 12:31:32 -0400
From: UWO Road Maintenance Crew <roadwork-bounces@uwo.ca>
To: UWO Community <>
BCC: Jack Smith <jsmith01@uwo.ca>, Jill Smith <jsmith02@uwo.ca>
Reply-To: UWO Road Maintenance Crew <roadwork@uwo.ca>
Subject: Medway Creek Bridge Closure
User-Agent: Thunderbird 2.0.0.19 (X11/20090105)
MIME-Version: 1.0
Content-Type: text/plain; charset=ISO-8859-1
Content-Transfer-Encoding: 7bit
```

The bridge crossing Medway Creek on Perth Drive just North of University Hospital will be closed for road work on April 15-16. Please use alternate entrances to campus during this time.

See <http://roadwork.uwo.ca/news/medwaybridge/> for more details.

John Smith
UWO Road Maintenance Crew
The University of Western Ontario

This message was sent to all faculty and staff.

To opt-out of further mass email messages from the UWO Road Maintenance Crew, send an email to roadwork@uwo.ca with the subject "opt-out".