



Email Standard

Responsible Office: Technology Services

Initial Standard Approved: 11/14/2023

Standard Statement and Purpose

Electronic mail or "email" is an official method for communication at VCU because it delivers information in a convenient, timely, cost effective, and environmentally sensitive manner.

This Standard ensures that all faculty, staff and students have access to this important form of electronic communication. It ensures faculty, staff and students can be reached through a standardized channel as needed. Electronic mail sent to the VCU email address may include notification of official University-related actions, including disciplinary action.

This Standard should be used in conjunction with the documents in the Related Documents Section.

Noncompliance with this Standard may result in disciplinary action up to and including termination. VCU supports an environment free from retaliation. Retaliation against any employee who brings forth a good faith concern, asks a clarifying question, or participates in an investigation is prohibited.

Table of Contents

Who Should Know This Standard	2
Definitions	2
Contacts	2
Standard Specifics and Procedures	3
Related Documents	6
Revision History	6
FAQs	6

Who Should Know This Standard

All faculty, staff, and students are responsible for knowing this standard and familiarizing themselves with its contents and provisions.

Definitions

Automatic Email Redirection

Email sent to an @vcu.edu address that is automatically sent via computer code to another email account rather than being delivered to the VCU account. This is sometimes referred to as auto forwarding.

Department/Service Account

An email account used for a project, department, or student worker. This is sometimes referred to as a generic account.

Electronic Mail (Email)

Messages distributed by electronic means from one computer user to one or more recipients via a network.

Official VCU Email Account

An email account provided by the University where email is delivered which is addressed to the official @vcu.edu address. This may reside on different systems based on the role of the individual.

Official VCU Email Address

An email address issued by the University, which is based on a person's first name, middle initial, and last name, and ends in the domain name "vcu.edu".

Personal Email Account

An email account issued by an internet service provider or web-based email service that is not managed by VCU.

University Business Unit

Within the context of this document, a University Business Unit references an academic, administrative, or research unit that is a part of the university and is assigned a Major Business Unit code by the university. Examples of a University Business Unit may include a College, a School, or a Department of the university.

Contacts

VCU Technology Services ("TS") officially interprets this policy. The Information Security Office is responsible for obtaining approval for any revisions through the appropriate governance structures.

Questions regarding this Standard should be directed to TS Central Services, Collaboration Services at drgee@vcu.edu.

Standard Specifics and Procedures ---

The following section contains the specifics and requirements of this standard.

University Use of Email

Email is an official method for communication at VCU.

Creation and Activation of Email Accounts

The VCU TS Collaboration Services team ("Collaboration Services") is exclusively and solely responsible for the issuance, creation, activation, and maintenance of official VCU email accounts ("email account").

Employees - An email account is automatically created for all active employees. This email account may reside on different systems depending on the employee's role. An employee email address ("email address") is the official email address to which the University will send email communications. This email address will be on the University's electronic directories and records for the employee. The email address will end in the domain name "vcu.edu". Employees are expected to use their email accounts to conduct university business. The email account will be suspended automatically when the employee Banner record reflects the employee is no longer active.

Students - A VCU email account is automatically created for all accepted students. This email account may reside on different systems depending on the student's role. All students are required to access their official VCU student email account within one week of the beginning of the first semester of enrollment. A student email address is the official email address to which the University will send email communications. This email address will be on the University's electronic directories and records for that student. The email address will end in the domain name "vcu.edu". The email account will suspend automatically if an accepted student does not enroll in classes or when the re-enrollment cycle of an active student (three semesters) ends.

Affiliates - A VCU email account is not automatically created for VCU affiliates. Email accounts will be activated at the request of the sponsoring department only. Once activated, an affiliate email account will be treated the same as an employee account, and all expectations associated with the employee account will apply to the affiliate email account.

Department/Service - A VCU email account is not automatically created for VCU departments and services. Accounts will be activated at the request of the sponsoring department and service owner only. Once activated, the account owner is expected to review the account, determine whether it is still needed, and change the associated credentials annually (“annual review”). Failure to complete the annual review or to update ownership should a role change will lead to the suspension of the account. Any access to the Department/Service accounts must be provided through delegation by the account owners.

Accessing Email Accounts

Email accounts are accessed using VCU’s, or when applicable, VCU Health System’s (VCUHS) centrally managed single-sign-on platform with the assigned VCU or VCUHS credentials. Mandatory multi-factor authentication provided and managed by VCU or VCUHS is required for access to email accounts.

Expectations Regarding the Use of Email

The VCU user community is expected to check their official VCU email on a frequent and consistent basis in order to remain informed of University-related communications. The University recommends checking emails daily.

VCU offices cannot validate that a communication coming by email is valid unless it comes from an official VCU email account. If students submit a request or report an issue to VCU administrative offices or faculty from personal email accounts (Gmail, Yahoo, etc.), they may be asked to resubmit it using an official VCU email account.

To ensure consistency of University communications, all official University communication must be done using the VCU-assigned email account. Records management policies at both the state level and VCU level strongly recommend the use of official email communication to protect employees and the university from legal and state compliance and policy issues, as VCU is an agency of the Commonwealth.

Under certain circumstances, third-party service providers (“providers”) contracted by the University may send emails on behalf of the university. In these cases, University business units contracting with such providers are expected to consult and register such services with the VCU Collaboration Services team so that appropriate arrangements can be made to minimize the risk in the delivery of these messages. Additionally, a provider is expected to use the following security controls to ensure reasonable security of the provider’s email environment:

- The Sender Policy Framework (“SPF”) to define authorized senders on the provider’s domain, and
- A DomainKeys Identified Mail (“DKIM”) to authenticate messages from the provider’s domain

If a provider wishes to send emails using a “vcu.edu” address using the provider’s infrastructure, then the provider must allow the configuration of a DKIM key with VCU. The university business unit is responsible for coordinating this effort between the provider and Collaboration Services.

Dual Role Employee/Student

It is common for students to also be employees while attending classes. One email account is provided for both roles. Students who are employed in any role, including hourly, student worker, or work study, will adhere to the employee security standards during their time of employment. The employee standards could include mobile device management and other security measures to meet university security and regulatory compliance requirements.

Faculty Expectations and Educational Uses of Email

Faculty members may require email for course content delivery, class discussion, and instructor conferencing and may specify course-related email policies in their syllabi. Faculty may require that students use their official VCU email account for course-related communications. Faculty may also require students to confirm their subscription to University-provided mailing lists.

Appropriate Use of Email

All use of email will be consistent with other University policies and local, state, and federal law, including, but not limited to, the VCU Computer and Network Resources Use Policy, Information Security Policy, Password Authentication and Access Standard, VCU Student Code of Conduct, and the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 (FERPA).

Secure email access protocols

Email should be accessed by supported web browsers. Due to vulnerabilities in third-party email clients, the use of third-party mail clients to access email is discouraged, with the exception of smart devices such as smartphones or tablets using properly maintained and patched mail clients and secure authentication methods. If third-party email clients are used to access email, then a modern and secure authentication and connection mechanism must be used. Collaboration Services, in conjunction with the VCU Information Security Office, is responsible for defining the accepted authentication and connection mechanisms that can be used by third-party mail clients to access email accounts.

Automatic Email Redirection

Email will be delivered to the official [@vcu.edu](mailto:vcu.edu) address. The University discourages mail forwarding as a routine practice because it cannot guarantee delivery of mail to systems outside of the VCU domain; however, it is allowed unless prohibited by departments; such as those that are handling sensitive and confidential information.

Email lost or not delivered because of redirection or forwarding does not absolve anyone from the responsibilities associated with communication sent to their official email address. The University is not responsible for and will not investigate problems with email delivery to outside redirected or forwarded accounts.

Privacy of Email

Virginia Commonwealth University uses various methods to protect the security of its computer and network resources and of its users' accounts. Users should be aware that any electronic communications

and data transmission utilizing University-owned computer and network resources, including those through email systems hosted and managed by the university, may be disclosed under the provisions of the Virginia Freedom of Information Act and other University, state and federal laws and regulations or for appropriate university business needs.

Related Documents

The VCU [Information Technology Policy Framework](#) contains VCU Information Technology Policies, Standards and Baseline requirements, all of which must be followed in conjunction with this Standard.

Baseline documents can be found in the VCU University Computer Center IT Professionals Intranet under Security Baselines. Access to the IT Professionals Intranet requires approval. Requests for access can be made via email to uccnoc@vcu.edu.

1. [Computer Network and Resources Use Policy](#)
2. [Information Security Policy](#)
3. [Password, Authentication and Access Standard](#)
4. [Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 \(FERPA\)](#)
5. [Student Code of Conduct](#)
6. [Network Management and Security Standard](#)
7. [Records Management Policy](#)

Revision History

This standard supersedes the following archived standards:

Email Standard Replaces Student Email Standard

Approval/Revision Date 11/14/2023

FAQs

There are no FAQs associated with this standard.