



CONESTOGA  
Connect Life and Learning

Approved by: Academic Coordinating Committee  
Authorizer: Manager, Corporate Communications  
Effective Date: September 1, 2010

## **E-mail, Voice Mail and Corporate Calendar Guidelines**

*Note: It is recommended that faculty inform each student group in writing as to their preferred methods of contact (voicemail, e-mail, office hours) so that students can make contact effectively. This is particularly important for faculty who do not have a designated phone extension.*

*Training sessions on the various communication methods will be made available at least once yearly.*

### **E-mail Guidelines**

Conestoga delivers official communications via e-mail. Employees must use their Conestoga e-mail when conducting Conestoga business. Occasional, incidental personal use is permitted, provided it is within expected codes of conduct.

Messages sent or received using the Conestoga e-mail system are the property of Conestoga and can be accessed by authorized personnel in the event of an appeal or investigation

All e-mail to current students should be directed to their Conestoga e-mail address. Current students must use their Conestoga e-mail.

Clients/colleagues send e-mails because they wish to receive a quick response. For that reason, e-mail should be checked daily and responded to within two business days or less.

E-mail users are expected to comply with normal standards of professional and personal courtesy, conduct, and communication

The "Subject" field of your e-mail should be concise and contain relevant information. This helps recipients locate and possibly file specific messages by subject and reduces the chance of your e-mail being stopped by filtering software.

In an effort to make efficient use of e-mail and communicate appropriately, it is recommended that e-mail be concise and to the point and respond to all questions posed by the sender. Use proper spelling, grammar, punctuation, structure and layout. You should also include appropriate greeting and signature lines. It is also advisable to review your message before sending.

Your signature block should include your name, position, department, and telephone number. In some cases, a fax number may be included. Using the signature block on all outgoing e-mail provides e-mail recipients with the information required to contact you easily.

Full name  
Title & Department  
Conestoga College Institute of Technology & Advanced Learning  
299 Doon Valley Drive (or alternate campus address)  
Kitchener, ON N2G 4M4  
519 748 5220 ext.  
E-mail address

Do not attach unnecessary files and, wherever possible, try to avoid sending large attachments. Do not use attachments for short messages that can be placed in the text of an e-mail. Instead, "cut and paste" text from your word processing program into the e-mail message. This eliminates the need for recipients to open a word processing program on their computers to view the attachment. Not all attachments are legible on portable digital assistant devices, so including your message in the e-mail text is more reliable.

Do not overuse the high priority option. Also, limit your use of URGENT and IMPORTANT.

Do not write in CAPITALS unnecessarily. It is generally felt that writing in capitals represents shouting and may trigger an unwanted response.

Adding disclaimers to your internal and external e-mails can help protect you from liability. Consider the following examples:

1. An employee accidentally forwards a virus to a customer by e-mail. If you add a disclaimer at the bottom of external mail, saying that the recipient must check each e-mail for viruses and that it cannot be held liable for any transmitted viruses, this will be of help, if the recipient sues.
2. An employee forwards a racist e-mail. If your e-mail disclaimer states that Conestoga policy expressly prohibits employees from making defamatory statements, you have a good case of proving that everything was done to prevent offensive e-mails.

Use Conestoga's standard disclaimer: *This E-mail contains privileged and confidential information intended only for the individual or entity named in the message. If the reader of this message is not the intended recipient, or the agent responsible to deliver it to the intended recipient, you are hereby notified that any review, dissemination, distribution or copying of this communication is prohibited. If this communication was received in error, please notify the sender by reply E-mail immediately, and delete and destroy the original message.*

Only use 'Reply to All' if you really need your message to be seen by each person who received the original message.

Conestoga provides internal mass mailing lists for sending information out to all faculty and/or students. If you need to reply to one of these e-mails, be sure not to use the 'reply all' function. In addition, you will receive information that may not appear to pertain directly to your position but please glance through it before deleting it. The goal is to help everyone become more aware of happenings at Conestoga.

Be careful when using abbreviations such as BTW (by the way) and LOL (laugh out loud) and emoticons, such as the smiley :-). The recipient might be unsure of the meanings of the abbreviations and, in business e-mails, these are generally not appropriate. If you are not sure whether your recipient knows what it means, it is better not to use it.

Do not forward chain letters.

Do not include any libelous, sexist or racially discriminating comments in e-mail communications, even if they are meant to be a joke.

Be careful about communicating confidential information. Sending an e-mail is like sending a postcard and subject to interception by unintended parties.

Employees should ensure all e-mails sent to students are professional in nature, because students could save e-mails and refer to them either internally, when planning appeals, and/or externally, when interacting with the public.

If you are away from the office for more than a day, you must activate the "Out of Office" feature to advise senders you are unavailable. If the reason for their communication is urgent, they will know immediately that they must contact an alternate or call the department for assistance.

Sample "Out of Office" Message:

I will be away from the office from Monday, March 15, to Friday, March 19, and will respond to your message, when I return on Monday, March 22. If you need immediate assistance, please contact Fred Gables at 519 748 5220, ext. 5419 or fgables@conestogac.on.ca.

If your mailbox is at capacity, you will be unable to send messages. Your mailbox should be maintained daily by archiving or permanently deleting messages, especially those with large attachments.

All instant messaging communications and information transmitted as it relates to students, clients, business associates and Conestoga employees must use Conestoga's IM system in accordance with the following rules.

### Instant Messaging (IM) Rules

1. Use professional and appropriate language in all instant messages. Employees are prohibited from sending abusive, harassing, threatening, menacing, discriminatory, pornographic, disrespectful, or otherwise offensive instant messages.
2. Employees are prohibited from sending or receiving jokes, rumours, gossip or unsubstantiated opinions via IM. These communications, which often contain objectionable material, are easily misconstrued when communicated electronically.
3. Employees may not use IM to transmit confidential, propriety, personal or embarrassing/potentially embarrassing information about the Conestoga, employees, clients, business associates or other third parties.
4. Employees may not share confidential, proprietary or embarrassing/potentially embarrassing business-related or personal IMs with the media, competitors, prospective employers or other third parties.
5. Employees shall have no reasonable expectation of privacy when using Conestoga's IM system. Conestoga reserves the right to monitor employee's use of the IM system.
6. All IM communications and information transmitted, received or archived within the company's IM system, are the property of Conestoga.
7. Employees are only to share their IM usernames with colleagues on a need-to-know basis.
8. Treat IM messages as business records that may be retained and could be used as evidence in litigation, audits and investigations.

### **Voicemail Guidelines**

Your voicemail greeting must be updated regularly to ensure it appropriately reflects your availability and commitment to respond.

Voicemail greeting must contain:

- your name and/or department name
- if you have a back-up or assistant, their name and extension
- when you will return the call

- if you are absent, you must update your greeting to advise callers and instruct them what to do (i.e. I will be out of the office. If you require immediate attention, please call.....)

If you share a voicemail box, the greeting should indicate that the mailbox is shared and provide the appropriate instructions for leaving a message.

Voicemail boxes should remain confidential and employees should not share passwords.

As a general rule, you are expected to check your voicemail several times a day. In the case of faculty, you are expected to check voicemail on a daily basis. All employees should respond to calls within two business days or less. Voicemail boxes should be cleared routinely.

When you are away from your phone (e.g., teaching, at a meeting, on vacation, etc.) or leave work for the day, you should forward calls to your voicemail. By doing so, the caller saves time, because they are not required to listen to multiple rings before leaving a message.

You should not forward your phone to another employee's extension unless there is a strong business need to do so (e.g., a supervisor may forward their phone to their assistant or a colleague, if they are waiting for a call that needs an immediate response).

When leaving a message for an external client, remember to leave your name, department, and organization name, the Conestoga phone number, your extension and the reason for your call.

When leaving a message for a fellow employee, remember to leave your full name, department, telephone extension and the reason for your call. This saves time, when the caller is responding to you.

Voicemail is not to be used to avoid answering calls or to screen calls.

If you will be away from Conestoga for an extended period of time, you should indicate that in your greeting and advise the caller that you will not be able to respond and who they should contact as an alternative.

Recommended sample scripts:

- 1) Hello, you have reached Mary Smith's voice mail in the \_\_\_\_\_ department on January 21. I'm sorry I have missed your call. Please leave a detailed message and I will return your call within two business days.

- 2) Hi, you have reached Mary Smith's voice mail in the Facilities Services Department. Today is Wednesday, January 21. I will be in meetings for most of the afternoon. I'm sorry that I've missed your call. Please leave me a message, together with your number, and I will return your call as soon as possible. If your call is urgent, please call our department receptionist at extension xxxx for assistance.
- 3) Hello, you have reached Mary Smith, Professor of \_\_\_\_\_ in the School of \_\_\_\_\_ at Conestoga. It's Wednesday, January 21, and I'll be out of the office all day today without access to voicemail. I will be returning to the Conestoga tomorrow. Please leave me a detailed message including your contact information and I will get back to you when I return. If you require immediate assistance, please call extension xxxx and speak with our department receptionist.
- 4) Hi, you've reached Mary Smith's confidential voicemail in Human Resources. I will be out of the office from Wednesday, January 21, through Friday, January 23. While I am away, Jean Brown will be acting for me. Jean can be reached at 748-5220, extension xxxx. If you'd like to leave me a message with your number, please do so, and I will get back to you when I return.

The Mitel Voicemail Users Guide can be found on the IT Service Desk website, <https://myconestoga.ca/web/it-service-desk/>

For assistance contact the IT Service desk at extension 3444 or e-mail [helpdesk@conestogac.on.ca](mailto:helpdesk@conestogac.on.ca).

### **Corporate Calendar Guidelines**

Employees are expected to keep their on-line calendar up to date with all work commitments including classes, office hours, meetings, and vacation days.

Proxy access to an employee's calendar should be provided to colleagues in the same department and employees in other areas of Conestoga as appropriate. Only those with proxy access can see details of your scheduled events.

The corporate calendar allows you and your working group to plan by storing information on work hours, events, meetings, deadlines, conference calls, vacation days and so on. Calendars can be updated with both recurring and individual events. The calendar can be accessed at Conestoga or remotely via the Internet. Using the "Check Busy" search feature is helpful, when trying to find a date/time that is convenient for all potential meeting attendees.

Conestoga will endeavor to update the calendar regularly with Conestoga-wide events, e.g., “Explore Conestoga”, KPI, semester start and end dates, official holidays, etc.

<b>Revision Date</b>	<b>Summary of Changes</b>
July 14, 2010	Policies and Procedures Committee - Approved
August 4 2010	Academic Coordinating Committee - Approved