



EMAIL, VOICEMAIL, VIRTUAL MEETINGS AND CALENDAR GUIDELINES

Approved by: Academic Coordinating Committee
Authorizer: Executive Director, Corporate Communications
Reference Code: HR2_V1
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Note: It is recommended that faculty inform each student group in writing as to their preferred methods of contact (voicemail, email, 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.

Email Guidelines

Conestoga delivers official communications via email. Employees must use their Conestoga email 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 email system are the property of Conestoga and can be accessed by authorized personnel in the event of an appeal or investigation.

All email to current students should be directed to their Conestoga email address. Current students must use their Conestoga email.

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

Email users are expected to comply with normal standards of professional and personal courtesy, conduct and communication.

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

To make efficient use of email and communicate appropriately, it is recommended that email 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. Using the signature block on all outgoing email provides email 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.
Email address

Avoid using unauthorized images or logos in your email signature, except for the college's official logo or departmental sub-brand logos. Refrain from adding slogans, taglines or images.

Do not attach unnecessary files and, wherever possible, try to avoid sending large attachments.

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.

Only use 'Reply 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 employees, employee groups, students or to specific departments or campuses. If you need to reply to one of these emails, 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. In business emails, these are generally not appropriate.

Do not forward chain letters.

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

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

Employees should ensure all emails sent to students are professional in nature because students could save emails 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 contact the department for assistance.

Sample “Out of office” message:

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

Your mailbox should be maintained daily by archiving or permanently deleting messages that are no longer needed.

All instant messaging (IM) 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 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 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 IM. 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. Treat IM messages as business records that may be retained and could be used as evidence in litigation, audits and investigations.

Selecting an Outlook or Teams profile image for use with email and instant messaging

Wear business casual or formal attire. Avoid logos or slogans on clothing.

Choose a neutral or professional setting. Avoid distracting or cluttered backgrounds.

Your image should primarily focus on your face and shoulders. Maintain a neutral or friendly expression. Avoid exaggerated poses or expressions. Do not include others in the image.

Avoid social media-style filters or effects. Do not use personal, cartoonish or stylized avatars. Refrain from using slogans, taglines or images. Ensure there are no inappropriate or offensive elements in the image.

Avoid images that disclose sensitive information.

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.

The Mitel Voicemail Users Guide can be found on the IT Service Desk website, <https://it.conestogac.on.ca/support/phones>

For assistance contact the IT Service desk at extension 3444 or e-mail helpdesk@conestogac.on.ca.

Virtual Meeting Guidelines

Ensure your internet connection, camera and microphone are working. Update Teams or Zoom if necessary.

Minimize background noise and interruptions. Use a headset if possible.

Use an approved Conestoga background, neutral background or set the background to "blur". Refrain from backgrounds that include slogans, taglines or logos other than approved college logos.

Wear attire suitable for the meeting's formality.

During the meeting, prevent background noise from interrupting others.

When possible, turn on your video to help with engagement and connection.

Use chat functions thoughtfully. Stay on topic and avoid side conversations. Use private messages only when necessary.

Raise your hand to signal when you want to speak instead of interrupting.

Speak clearly and concisely. Avoid dominating the conversation.

Keep meals and snacks off camera unless the meeting is informal.

Wait for the host to officially end the meeting or give closing remarks.

Calendar Guidelines

Employees are expected to keep their outlook 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 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.

Revision Log:

July 14 2010	Policy and Procedure Committee – approved
August 4, 2010	Academic Coordinating Committee – approved
December 4, 2024	Minor clarifying edits and section added for virtual meetings – Academic Coordinating Committee - approved