

Email best practice

Email on SCOTS

Email via SCOTS is primarily for business use. Personal use is permitted within the guidelines of the IT Code of Conduct and it is the responsibility of all users to comply with this.

All email messages are logged, scanned and stored for reference purposes if required. All incoming and outgoing email messages are scanned as they enter or leave the network. Messages with attachments are examined for virus infection or files containing software.

Always make sure you are sending to the correct recipient and make it clear who you are and whom you represent.

Be cautious with the distribution of your official email address. Unless it is for genuine business reasons and approved by your manager, do not register your address on internet bulletin boards or with newsgroups or mailing lists.

Email attachment restrictions

There are a number of attachments or file formats that are not permitted to enter the SCOTS network via email, these include:

- executable files (.exe)
- oversized attachments
- audio and video files

The SG IT security policy does not permit the transmission of any audio or video files into the SG network, under any circumstances. This is because any data in a format that a computer can directly execute or run can be a threat to the security of the network, as well as using up valuable bandwidth.

Oversized files

The Scottish Government is part of the government Public Services Network (PSN). To comply with their standards we have an email size limit of 25MB (which includes the email and any attachments). If you have an email over this size you can often resolve the problem by splitting it over several messages.

If you have a requirement to receive audio, video, executable and oversized files for official purposes, [contact cyber security and defence](#) for advice.

Official-Sensitive email

Email with content or attachments classified as Official-Sensitive must only be sent from SCOTS to other government departments on the Public Services Network (PSN). This ensures that Official-Sensitive material is sent over a secure connection.

To prevent inadvertent sending of Official-Sensitive material, auto-forwarding of SCOTS email to non-PSN internet addresses is prohibited.

Email permissions

If you are out of the office for an extended period of time, for example on holiday, you can give colleagues access to your Outlook email. This is done by setting permissions on your inbox and folders, or by redirecting mail to someone else.

How to give others access to your inbox:

First, put on your out of office to show that you are away:

1. Open Outlook.
2. Go to **File > Automatic Replies (Out of Office)** and add a message showing the dates you are away and who is dealing with your email.
3. Click **OK**.

Next, return to your email and right click on Inbox

1. Select **Properties**, then the **Permissions** tab.
2. Click **Add** and select the name of the person you want to give permissions to.
3. Click **Add** and **OK** – the name will appear in the permissions box.
4. Click on the name to select it, and then choose the level of access you want to give them from the Permission Level dropdown.
5. Click **Apply** and then **OK** to finish.

If you want to give a colleague access to any subfolders, repeat the above steps by right clicking on each folder.

Check your colleague can access your inbox before you leave the office.

How to view a colleague's inbox:

1. With Outlook open, select **File > Open & Export > Other User's Folder**
2. Click **Name**, select the person's name and OK.
3. Check that the Folder type is set to Inbox.
4. Click on **OK**.

How to redirect email to a colleague:

1. With Outlook open, select **File > Automatic Replies (Out of Office)** and add a message showing the dates you are away and who is dealing with your email.
2. Click on **Rules** and then **Add Rule**.
3. Under Perform these actions, click the **Forward** checkbox and click **To**.
4. Select the person you want to forward your mail to, then click **To** and **OK**.
5. Click **OK** to close Rule window.
6. A dialog box will ask you to confirm you are happy for the rule to be set.
7. Click **Yes**.

When someone sends you an email, they will receive your out of office reply and the message will be forwarded to the person you specified.

If you need to edit or delete a rule, open Rules again from File > Automatic Replies (Out of Office) and select the rule to edit or delete it.

Email chains, scams and phishing

Junk email usually advertises products or services and is sent to people without asking if they want to receive these messages. This email is also called spam or unsolicited email.

Chain email

Most of us have come across electronic chain letters, asking us to pass them on to large numbers of other people. This email may claim to be warnings about viruses but they are really hoaxes, often forwarded with the best of intentions.

- **delete** any that you receive
- **do not** forward them to other people

You can check if an email refers to a known hoax by visiting the [hoax website](#). If you still feel that it may be genuine, forward it to [cyber security and defence](#).

Email scams

Although we try to block email scams from the network we're not always successful. If you receive an offer that seems to be too good to be true you're probably right. If in any doubt on whether an email is genuine or not then you should contact [cyber security and defence](#) for advice and forward a copy of the suspect email as an attachment. This will then allow the team to be able to examine the email's properties.

Phishing scams

Phishing scam emails are a criminally fraudulent process of attempting to acquire sensitive information such as usernames, passwords and credit card details by

pretending to be from a known and trusted organisation such as online banks, and social websites.

Links are used in the email to direct unsuspecting users to a fake website. The fake is designed to look identical to the legitimate one and requests users to enter personal and sensitive information such as account details.

The senders of the emails use a variety of techniques to make them appear genuine such as 'spoofing' (mimicking a genuine email address such as a bank) and naming links to make them appear as if they are linking to the genuine site.

If you have any doubt regarding the authenticity of a particular email you should either contact [cyber security and defence](#) or phone the organisation direct.

If you are sure that an email is a phishing scam then you should delete it from your mailbox. Do not reply to the sender or open any attachments or click on any hyperlinks.

Latest known phishing scam emails

Information on the latest phishing scam emails can be found on websites such as [millersmiles](#) and [hoaxslayer](#) which provide searchable archives of scam and hoax emails.

Filtering email

To stop mass-mailed unsolicited advertising /offensive material, often referred to as 'spam' or junk mail, Personal Message Manager software checks all email messages coming in to the SCOTS network. The software will block and quarantine all email which it classifies as junk.

Help and support

If you have any queries or need support, contact [cyber security and defence](#).

Personal Message Manager

Personal Message Manager (PMM) allows you to manage email which has been identified as potential spam by the Scottish Government mail server.

If you receive spam email, the messages will be kept in PMM. The next day you will receive an email including a link to review these and either:

- release genuine emails
- mark genuine email sender addresses as safe
- delete unwanted junk emails

Access [Personal Message Manager](#) and log in with your email address and SCOTS password.

Read the [guidance on Personal Message Manager](#) for more information.

Using Outlook to block unwanted email

Using personal message manager will block most of the junk email currently circulating. There is also a junk email filter in Outlook that you can set up on your mailbox to capture any unwanted messages that still get through.

You can block unwanted emails by the email sender address, by international country of origin and whitelist genuine email addresses so that they are not blocked. You can [read the Outlook guidance](#) which will show you how to set this up.

IT CODE OF CONDUCT

The IT Code of Conduct sets out guidance on the acceptable use of SCOTS, in particular email and use of the intranet. It outlines our policy on the personal use of Scottish Government IT facilities.

The code applies to:

- anyone sending information across Scottish Government or public networks via email or internet services (including contractors and agency workers)
- users of SCOTS
- users of other IT systems or devices supplied by the Scottish Government or its agencies
- users of IT systems supplied by a third party and used for Scottish Government business

It covers:

- personal use of SCOTS and the internet
- misuse of IT misconduct examples
- accidental access to restricted sites
- sharing sensitive data by email
- monitoring

The code aligns with the wide range of legislation to tackle the potential criminal and civil liability issues that may arise from colleagues' misuse of communication facilities while at work.

You should comply with the code at all times.

You will be deemed to agree to its terms, including monitoring arrangements, unless you specifically write, stating the contrary, to:

HR Shared Services
F1 Spur
Saughton House
Edinburgh
EH11 3 XD

Personal use of SCOTS and internet

As the owner of our IT equipment, the Scottish Government is responsible for any emails and downloaded internet pages generated or stored on it.

You are allowed to use our IT facilities for personal use as long as this is in your own time, when you are keyed out of the flexi system or outside normal working hours.

Permitted use

You can use SCOTS to:

- prepare simple documents or spreadsheets on personal matters – these must not be permanently stored on SCOTS
- send brief personal emails (10 lines) with small attachments (two pages) to internal and external addresses – you must change the message sensitivity option to 'personal'
- prepare study material if you are studying for any form of qualification that is being supported by the organisation
- access the internet for personal use (excluding for reasons set out in misuse and unacceptable behaviour)

Inappropriate use

You must not use:

- SCOTS to prepare or research material in connection with running a private business
- official templates for personal documents
- chat rooms and newsgroups

All online activity is monitored. Information and Technology Services (iTECS) will inform your manager of any inappropriate or excess personal usage.

Misconduct examples – IT misuse

Misuse of IT facilities may lead to disciplinary and/or criminal proceedings.

Making defamatory, actionable or untrue statements about colleagues or contacts on email or online is no different from doing this in any other way.

Legislation that governs your use of IT at work includes:

- Civic Government (Scotland) Act 1982
- Telecommunications Act 1984
- Protection of Children Act 1978
- Criminal Justice Act 1988
- Equality Act 2010
- Data Protection Act 2018/General Data Protection Regulation
- Defamation Laws
- Copyright Laws
- Computer Misuse Act 1990

Misconduct examples

- running a personal website
- private use of chat rooms and newsgroups
- improper use of official templates
- loading any software for personal use onto your PC or laptop or network drives, including screensavers, games, CDs from a computer magazine or shareware from the internet
- subscribing to mailing lists ('listservers') for purposes other than those that are work-related
- inserting personal removable media into a SCOTS device (e.g. memory sticks, CDs, DVDs, etc.)

This list is not exhaustive. Each case will be considered on its own merits, but may lead to disciplinary action.

Examples of serious disciplinary offences

- attempts to access, active accessing, downloading, display, storage and distribution of pornographic, racist or other offensive material, or material relating to illegal activities
- disclosing your SCOTS password to someone else to use
- attempting to access and gaining access with the intent to modify data or programs in parts of the SCOTS network for which you don't have authorisation. These are also criminal offences.
- generating messages in a way that makes them appear to come from someone else
- sending abusive, offensive, libellous or nuisance emails
- generating and/or distributing chain email
- using IT facilities for private commercial use

- contravening the rules of personal use of IT facilities
- distributing or printing copyright materials in violation of copyright laws
- participating in user groups or discussions which are politically sensitive or potentially controversial
- use of any system supplied by a third party for purposes other than it was supplied for

This list is not exhaustive. Serious offences could lead to dismissal for gross misconduct.

Accidental access to restricted sites

It is possible to connect accidentally to websites that contain illegal or offensive material.

If this happens to you, you should disconnect from the site immediately and inform your manager.

If you receive an email which you consider may contain pornographic or offensive material, you should close the document, advise your manager and telephone the IT Helpdesk on 0131 244 8500 (option 2).

Sharing sensitive data by email

You should never send sensitive information to cabinet secretaries or ministers outside the Scottish Government in an external email or over the internet.

Personal email addresses must not be used to register for business services. All information services and assets must be registered in the [information asset register](#).

You must use the Public Services Network (PSN) to send mail to other government departments for documents up to and including OFFICIAL-SENSITIVE.

If in doubt about whether material is regarded as sensitive, email [cyber security and defence](#) for advice on how to share it.

Monitoring use of IT systems

We monitor and regularly review the use of our IT systems.

We record:

- all email activity
- the user name, PC, date and time and full address of every internet site accessed (even if the attempt is unsuccessful)

You should be aware that many internet sites record visitors for marketing purposes, and this information could become public.

As part of our standard monitoring procedures, we will raise any evidence of misuse with Information and Technology Services (iTECS) and People Directorates.

Contact HR Help if you are:

- a manager who is concerned about one of your colleague's use of IT facilities – you should first raise any issues with the colleague
- concerned that a colleague is misusing the system or that your PC has been misused

OUTSIDE OCCUPATIONS OR ACTIVITIES

We recognise the potential benefits to be gained from colleagues participating in outside activities including but not exclusive to additional employment (including self-employment); career development initiatives involving transferable skills; or voluntary, community and charity work. You are generally permitted to engage in activities out with the duties of your role within the Scottish Government, however you need to be aware of the conduct rules that may apply and circumstances when permission must be sought and declared.

For colleagues who are leaving the Civil Service the Business Appointment Rules will apply. These are in place as it is in the public interest that people with experience of public administration should be able to move into business or other bodies, and that such movement should not be frustrated by unjustified public concern over a particular appointment. However there should be no cause for any suspicion of impropriety and the business. These Rules provide for the scrutiny of appointments and permission may be necessary to take up appointment for up to two years from their last day of employment (depending on their role and nature of the outside activity).

Who does the policy apply to?

The rules apply to all colleagues working in the Scottish Government

The rules may also apply to your spouse, co-habitee or close relative; much will depend on whether the activity is relevant to your official duties.

This equally applies to those who are not civil servants but are undertaking work for the Scottish Government.

What are the key requirements?

- Full-time colleagues must not accept any posts in any trading, commercial, industrial or financial firms or companies or other organisations which require attendance at any time during normal official hours¹
- You must not take part in any activity which would in any way impair your usefulness as a public servant, nor engage in any occupations or undertakings which might in any way conflict with the interests of the Scottish Government or be inconsistent with your position as a public servant.
- Colleagues in Bands A-C are required to register their outside occupation or activity where there is the potential for a conflict of interest to arise in the case management section of the eHR self-referral facility.

¹ This rule does not affect the appointment of staff as non-executive directors in outside organisations as part of their official duties.

- Colleagues in the SCS are required to register all relevant outside occupations and activities HR Help should be consulted in every case where you have any doubt about the propriety of an activity or occupation

Related policies:

This policy should be read in conjunction with the Conduct policy and guidance on Confidentiality and Official information and Conflict of Interest.

If you are taking up appointment after leaving the civil service you should follow the detailed guidance in the Leaving the Scottish Government section of the intranet.

PROCEDURES

Guiding principles

Taking up appointments whilst a civil servant

Subject to the general principles governing conduct and the rules above, the Scottish Government will not concern itself with the activities in which you engage outside your official duties unless such activities involve:

- use of official time and/or resources;
- use of your official designation;
- use of official information or of experience acquired in the course of official duties; or
- working for another Government department, or any form of service in any of the armed forces - but see (Armed Forces) .

In all such cases, advice must be sought from HR Help 0131 244 8500.

Process

1. If you are considering an approach from an outside employer offering employment for which approval would be required under these rules - or which seems likely to lead to such an offer - you must report the approach as follows:
 - Permanent Secretary: Report to The First Minister;
 - Other members of the Senior Civil Service (or equivalents): Report to The Permanent Secretary;
 - All other staff: Report to HR using HR Online

If you are involved with procurement or contract work you should report any such approach, particularly where it emanates from an outside employer with whom you or your staff have had official dealings, **whether or not** you are considering taking it up.

You should read and ensure you comply with the guidance on the use of official information and conflict of interest

SUPPORT

Examples

Example 1: an interest in a private company in your policy field

If you are in Rural Directorate you must seek advice from HR Help if you wish to acquire an active or financial interest in any private business or enterprise which is related to agriculture, and in particular if you are to live on or be associated with the management of a farm.

Additionally if you intend to live on a farm managed by your spouse, co-habitee or close relative you must consult HR Help.

Example 2: a position in an organisation with a pre-existing relationship with SG

If you have been offered a position (such as a Board member) with an organisation which has an existing relationship with the Scottish Government, you will need to consider whether other SG employees already hold a similar position with the organisation. Having a number of SG employees associated with an organisation that could benefit from decisions made and actions taken by the SG could be construed as providing an unfair advantage to that organisation. Where you are unsure about the appropriateness of the level of SG staff involvement in a particular organisation, you should seek advice from HR Help. You may also wish to discuss the matter with the Policy lead area within SG, your line management and the outside organisation (but bearing in mind that the organisation may not fully appreciate the principles and rules of conduct associated with your employment in the SG).

Example 3: Civil Servants Who Join The Armed Forces

Scottish Government as an employer supports the reserve forces and the Scottish Government will give you permission to join these forces wherever it reasonably can. Further information on how we support colleagues who wish to become, or are a Reservist in the Volunteer Reserve Forces can be found on the intranet.

Guidance

Contact HR Help if you have any queries.

Forms & Systems

You should record your interests in the case management section of e HR.

REGISTERING YOUR INTERESTS

You must declare and register your interests. This is to ensure that there can be no suggestion of bias or the use of an official position to further personal interests. Colleagues in Bands A-C should only register information where they or close family members have official dealings with the organisation and there is potential for a conflict of interest to arise. Senior civil servants are required to register all of the following:

- business interests (including directorships), not only personal, but also of close family members
- shareholdings or other securities/financial interests which you or members of your close family hold – where these are trusts, for example PEP, ISA, only the holding organisation needs to be declared. Senior civil servants aren't required to register cash ISAs
- any other financial interest where there is the potential for a conflict of interest to arise as a result of your official position (excluding bank and mortgage providers)
- private interests in organisations where there could be the potential for a conflict of interest to arise, for example membership of clubs, societies and other organisations

From time to time, your senior management, in consultation with HR policy colleagues, may issue additional guidance tailored to your business area.

Disciplinary action and prosecution

Where a conflict does arise and the interest has not been recorded on the eHR system and discussed with your manager, disciplinary action may be taken.

You may be subject to criminal prosecution if you act corruptly. Disciplinary action may also be taken regardless of, and in parallel to, criminal proceedings.

Managing a potential conflict of interest

You should raise any potential conflicts of interest with your manager. Colleagues in Band A-C can raise any queries via HR Online selecting 'other' in the dropdown menu. Senior civil servants should copy in the senior staff team.

There are a range of actions that could be taken, including but not limited to:

- delegating the affected colleague's responsibilities to another
- declaring any relevant interests at all meetings to which the interest relates
- recording potential conflicts in the minutes of meetings
- excluding the affected colleague from meetings (or parts of meetings) which discuss matters related to their interests
- moving to another post in the Scottish Government where the conflict would not arise
- disposing of the interest

You should agree appropriate actions with your manager in writing, inform your director (or your director general for senior civil servants) and record them on the eHR system. You must ensure they are complied with at all times.

How to register

You should register your interests on the [eHR system](#) by following these steps:
Employee Self Service > Case Management – Employee > Register of Interests
Senior civil servants should also discuss and record potential propriety or conflict of interest issues as part of their mid-year and end-year performance appraisals.

Definition of close family members

Close family members means family members who may be expected to influence, or be influenced by, you. Examples may include domestic partner and children, children of domestic partner, dependants or dependants of domestic partner.

Extract from SCS performance management guidance :

Conflict of interest

Senior Civil Servants must discuss and record any conflict of interest issues as part of their mid-year and end-year performance appraisals.

You must tick the box on your performance management form to confirm this discussion has taken place.

I'm a civil servant - can I apply for a public appointment?

Scottish Ministers ask that a wide and diverse range of individuals apply for ministerial appointments to public bodies. We are looking for people from all walks of life, to really reflect the diverse nature of the Scottish population. You are not necessarily excluded from that as a civil servant and it can be another way to contribute to civic society.

So, if you are a current civil servant below Senior Civil Service grade you can apply for a ministerial public appointment. You will need to consider any potential for conflicts of interest, including perceived conflicts of interest. You should also consider the time commitments required.

How to apply

Discuss your interest and application with your manager and the Scottish Government sponsor director detailed in the appointment application.

When speaking to your manager and sponsor director you should consider whether, and in what timeframe, you have:

- been involved in developing policy which affects the public body and/or its board
- had access to unannounced government policy or privileged information affecting the public body and/or its relevant board
- been responsible for regulatory or any other decisions affecting the public body and/or its board
- had any official dealings with the public body and/or its board

You can [ask People Directorate for advice](#) and you should seek permission from HR before making an application if:

- you have had continual or repeated official dealings with the public body and/or its board at any time during your Civil Service career
- you have had access to commercially sensitive information of competitors of the public body and/or its board
- the proposed appointment would involve making representations to, or lobbying the government on behalf of, the public body and/or its board

Allow time before the closing date to consider these points and to talk to people.

These guidelines are designed to uphold the core values of integrity, honesty, objectivity and impartiality set out in the [Civil Service Code](#).

Senior Civil Servants

If you are a current Senior Civil Servant you should discuss your intention to apply for a public appointment with the [Senior Talent and Staffing Team](#) before making any application. You should consider any conflict of interest including the perception of others or the potential risks to Ministers and be prepared to discuss these with a member of the team.

Applying after leaving the Civil Service

If you are considering taking up a public appointment after leaving the Civil Service you may need approval to do so. Read more about [employment after leaving the Civil Service](#).