DEPARTMENT OF BIOCHEMISTRY EMAIL GUIDELINES

We are all faced with large numbers of emails and a lot of our time is spent on dealing with email correspondence and a significant part of this includes trawling through emails that are either not necessary or not needed.

As a department we should aim to reduce email traffic by eliminating unnecessary/repeated messages, formatting emails appropriately and keeping emails short and clear.

The guidelines below suggest some ways of achieving this, especially when emailing to large recipient groups.

TL;DR

Five golden rules of emailing:

1. Is the email really needed? Would a Teams chat or a call suffice?
2. Include only those who really need to receive the email as recipients.
3. Keep the email short and include a descriptive subject line.
4. Avoid attachments when possible and minimise their size.
5. Add calendar invitations to emails about meetings

WHO AND WHEN TO EMAIL

- Do you really need to send an email and do all recipients need to get it?
    - Would a short Teams message be enough if there is just one recipient?

- Emails should be sent to specific recipients where possible, *e.g.* only to people in the Sanger Building when the email is not relevant to those in the Hopkins Building.

- The intended recipients of a group email should be always stated at the top of the message. It might not be obvious and especially important when recipients are suppressed via "bcc" function.
    - *E.g.* "To all research group heads"

- "To" and "cc" mean different things when used in the same email.
    - "To" typically requires an action and/or a response, while "cc" is typically for information only.
        - "cc" should only be used when really needed.

- Use "bcc" (blind/hidden copy) in reply to email to remove someone from the thread while letting them and others know you have responded.
    - E.g. "Thanks John for the intro, I have bcc'd you to remove you from further replies" to let others the bcc's person has been removed and why.

- Aim to send emails during working hours and to use the "delay sending" option out of hours to define when the email is delivered to the recipient(s). The same can be done with Teams messages.

HOW TO EMAIL

- *All* Departmental and University correspondence should be sent from cam.ac.uk email accounts.
    - The use of personal email accounts, such as Hotmail, Gmail and Yahoo are strongly discouraged, particularly for external communication.
    - Same goes for automated forwarding to external email accounts.

- The subject line should be clear and concise. NOT including a subject is strongly discouraged.
    - Should the topic of the email thread change, the subject should be changed accordingly.

- Keep the emails short and to the point.

- The main message of the email should be apparent from the body of the email, not only through opening of an attachment, *e.g.* seminar announcements. (see note on attachments below)

- Use polite and professional language.

- It is encouraged to include a signature with your affiliation at the bottom of the email (“Name, Department of Biochemistry, University of Cambridge” as a minimum, especially for external communications).

- Regular types of circulars to the Department should have a short category label, in capital letters, at the start of the subject line, e.g. “SEMINAR: Special seminar by Dr Smith in Perham Room at 2pm today”. These will enable readers to gauge the topic easily and also allow for automatic filtering of emails to dedicated folders.

The categories are:

  - NEWS – for all general Dept news and announcements
  - SEMINAR – for all seminars and talks
  - REQUEST – for all requests for chemicals, reagents, equipment
  - LOST & FOUND – as the title implies
  - SOCIAL – for all social events (Friday beer sessions, Christmas lunch)
  - SAFETY – all safety announcements
  - SERVICES – announcements to do with cleaning, reception, glass washing
  - CATERING – all catering announcements
  - BUILDING – All building related announcements (lifts, repairs, …)
  - TEACHING – for all teaching related emails

- URGENT in the subject should be used for *truly urgent* emails only (*e.g.* grant submission deadline).
    - If it is so urgent, perhaps send a Teams chat instead or call the person?

- EMAILS WRITTEN ENTIRELY WITH CAPITAL LETTERS SHOULD BE AVOIDED
    - They are often interpreted as equivalent to SHOUTING!

WHAT TO EMAIL

- Attachments should be converted to a minimal size, allowing members of the Department to open these easily on mobile phones and with limited download speeds.
    - Many online tools for PDF compressions are available (not to be used for confidential documents!).
    - Effective file sharing, such as Moodle or Sharepoint/OneDrive, is encouraged and should be used where possible.
    - 3 MB document to everyone in the Dept needs >1 GB of storage space in different mailboxes.
    - Compression of images (with a reduction in file size) is possible also for editable files.

- Documents that are *not* to be edited should be sent as PDF files, rather than a Word/Excel/Powerpoint files and, again, the size minimized without loss of information. If possible, multiple files should be merged into one as well, *e.g.* papers for particular meeting.

- Emails with an invitation to an event at a specified time should include a calendar entry (.ics file) with the necessary details (location, possible remote connection link etc).
    - For a specified list of participants, a calendar invitation should be sent instead.