

Geographical and Earth Science ***'Good practice email' guidance***

Background: this guidance emerges as a direct result of email burden being repeatedly raised as an issue within Athena Swan related events and surveys. Staff and some students report to be impeded by the burden of email and it seems to be affecting productivity and work-life balance.

This is guidance only – and we encourage staff and students to block time for email and to create core or ‘real work’ windows in the manner that suits their job type/studies.

Consultation at the staff board means that we have stopped short of introducing a school-wide policy on email timings and an email free day – however, we encourage individual experimentation and feedback to the Athena Swan SAT.

Good practice emailing

- If you are not available to read or respond to email, please use out-of-office messages. This helps you to relax more when away from email and allows senders to know responses will not be forthcoming.
- We encourage experimenting with the restriction of email to time-blocks in the morning and/or afternoon creating ‘real work windows’ where staff can concentrate on core activity.
- If you have a problem that needs to be resolved by a supervisor, line manager or senior manager or the HOS, please try and resolve it within a telephone conversation/verbal meeting, rather than email.
- If you need to email about a complex problem or issue – please do not send it on Friday afternoons because a) very little can be done at that point b) it is psychologically difficult for those staff receiving the email at the start of a weekend.
- Please try not to email work tasks after 3.30pm on a Friday to allow for effective ‘finishing off’ of ‘real work’.
- GES encourages no work emails to be sent in the evening or at weekends – unless there is a very specific reason (eg, you are a flexible worker or are at a life stage that requires flexible working) and you have the agreement of the person you are emailing that this might happen.
- We encourage you to experiment with ‘email free’ days – it is possible to have an ‘email free Friday’, for example. If you choose to do this, let us know if it makes a difference.
- Please do not write long emails – try to keep it short and precise.
- Please do not always expect a quick reply – especially when staff are dealing with multiple tasks – it is not always possible.
- Please do not ‘reply all’ all of the time – it is fine to assume that we do not all need to be in the email loop of clarifications and thanks.
- Please think about how you compose an email – keep it friendly and polite.
- Please feel free to switch off email after work and do not have emails pinging to your phones automatically – this enables better work-life balance when you are away from the university.

- Senior staff could try to alert the centre and wider university to our email preferences and to improve wider email cultures.

Thank you.

Athena Swan SAT, 2015