Electronic Mail Policy

EMP 1: Electronic mail (Email) is a professional medium commonly used to communicate with colleagues and others in and outside various work settings. This medium facilitates professional communication when direct, in-person conversation is impossible, unnecessary, or even undesirable. In these instances electronic mail serves as an official organizational archive of professional work-related exchanges beyond paper-based and other electronic documentation. Because of its ubiquity, organizations like human service agencies use policies to govern licensed professionals' use of agency-related email correspondence. To prepare graduates for this practice reality, the *Council on Social Work Education* requires accredited programs to mentor students in verbal and written professional communication.[1] Since this professor teaches university-level, pre-professional, writing intensive courses, all emailed correspondence will reflect the school's email policy,[2] and prevailing professional standards.[3] Instances when it does not, feedback will be provided before a substantiative response in order to cultivate students' professional use of email and mirror the contemporary practice reality they will face.

EMP 2: Prevailing professional standards used by this professor to guide all email content and related processes are adapted from the *Owl Online Writing Lab* at Purdue University.[4] Course email standards are consistent with those in professional human service settings, and apply equally and without exception to both professor and students. The goal in using these standards is to regularize the use of technical writing skills graduates will need in their professional life beyond the university. This will contribute to their success in every aspect of practice since written communication is so fundamental to our work with colleagues and clients alike.

EMP 3: The following procedures will pertain to all email. These steps are designed to increase mindfulness of the need for professionalism in all writing, including electronic mail. They are also designed to promote habitual self-regulation (CSWE EP 2.1.2) to ensure same:

    (a)   I **will respond** to email messages:
- within 24 hours—often sooner;
- that meet the above standards;
- using the above prevailing professional standards;

    (b)   I **will not respond** to email messages:
- That are substandard; rather
- I will inform senders when emails are substandard;
- I will await its resubmission consistent with prevailing standards; then
- I will respond to the revised message within 24 hours.

EMP 4: To demonstrate the impact of substandard email messages on readers, a link is placed atop each class resource page to an article on this very topic.[5] This instructional reference begins with a sample substandard email, then provides five hypothetical responses written by professors. It is hoped that these examples will motivate students to reflect on how readers will receive their messages thereby reinforcing the need for considered wording of email content and adherence to professional standards.

EMP 5: As always, this professor welcomes thoughts and suggestions regarding this Electronic Mail Policy (via email or delivered in-person).

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[1] CSWE (2008) EP 2.1.1, 2.1.3, & 2.1.9, http://www.cswe.org/Accreditation/2008EPASDescription.aspx
[2] **Social Work Student Handbook**, http://www.mnstate.edu/socialwork/studentresources/ Page 20: *Email Policy*.
[3] ***Email** Professional Standards* link atop the resource page of each course.
[4] Please visit https://owl.english.purdue.edu
[5] ***Email** Sample with Responses* link atop the resource page of each course.