Introduction

Student governments and organizations should be committed to disseminating information to students in an effective fashion that gives all students equal knowledge and opportunity to be active members. Because the University’s official form of communication is through email, recognized student governments and organizations are provided with services to communicate with their constituents. The ability of all student organizations to send mass emails is governed by the University’s Mass Email Policy: [http://www.uoguelph.ca/info/massemail.shtml](http://www.uoguelph.ca/info/massemail.shtml).

The policies and processes outlined in this document attempt to strike a balance between the speed and ease of use (for the sender) of mass email and the impact on each member of the community receiving unwanted and unrequested email messages daily. The policy has been developed in the interest of fairness as well as respect for personal time and University resources. The ability to send mass email is provided to groups registered under the Student Organizational Policy (SOP). These groups assume full responsibility for abiding by the Acceptable Use Policy for University of Guelph Computing and Networking Facilities ([http://www.uoguelph.ca/web/aupg.shtml](http://www.uoguelph.ca/web/aupg.shtml)) and the University’s Mass Email Policy. The Mass Email Policy does not apply to the creation and configuration of Listserv email distribution and discussion lists.

This policy and its procedures will be reviewed by the Office of Student Affairs and CCS on an annual basis to ensure its effectiveness and to evaluate the available delivery methods.

Email Categories and Delivery Methods

There are three categories of mass email:

- Official messages from the administration
- Emergency emails
- Informational messages

Student government email falls into the third category. Such emails may be intended for one, several, or all student groups on campus and must be pertinent to the shared interests of the particular community or communities receiving the message and adhere to the guidelines for distribution of mass email. These categories are defined in the Mass Email Policy.
Note: to avoid the perception of student government email communication as spam, it is essential for student groups to consider the needs of their audience, and that the targeting and frequency of the messages reflect such consideration.

There are three electronic avenues available to student governments when communicating with their constituents by email:

- **Mass E-mail**: This mode of communication is for critical e-mails that must reach all current students. Some of these issues include, but are not limited to, election information, information on annual general meetings, and important upcoming events. These messages are approved by the Office of Student Affairs on a case by case basis. Recipients are not able to opt-out of this type of communication.

- **High Volume E-mail Lists**: This mode of communication is a self-managed service for event announcements, campaign updates, general announcements and matters that are not of a critical nature. The Office of Student Affairs is responsible for approving High Volume E-mail lists. Once such a list is approved, student governments self-manage the content and frequency of what is sent to the list. This service is restricted to PSOs and academic clubs. Recipients must be given the option to opt-out of this type of communication.

- **Listserv Lists**: This mode of communication is opt-in and requires that members of student communities subscribe to Listserv lists. This mode is very effective for online email-based discussion groups or an announcement list for non-academically organized student groups, such as a common interest group. Recipients must opt-in to this form of communication.

It is strongly recommended that Mass Emails and High Volume Email Lists be used infrequently, and that clubs be encouraged to invite students to join the organization’s Listserv List, which can be used as often during the semester as desired.

**Approval Procedures**

Email communication from student governments and clubs will be governed by the appropriate elected student government. The student organizations recognized under the Student Organization Policy will have the primary authority for emails from their respective organizations. ASOs must seek approval from the appointed member of their respective PSO for Mass Emails and High Volume Email Lists.

Each PSO will appoint one executive member, and an alternate, to be responsible for overseeing the email process and communications. It is the responsibility of each PSO to provide the Office of Student Affairs with the name of this designated executive member. This responsibility should be written into the job responsibilities of an appropriate executive position. This executive member would also have responsibility for overseeing the email communication process for their ASOs. Academic programs that are given special status under the SOP will also appoint an executive member (e.g., BAS). Special Status Groups may coordinate directly with Office of Student Affairs regarding their organization’s email policy and communications.
Mass Email

- The Office of Student Affairs has the authority to approve Mass Emails to students. Requests to send a Mass Email should be forwarded to l.gatto@exec.uoguelph.ca for approval by the Office of Student Affairs. Requests for Mass Email must come from the appropriate executive member of a PSO, either for the PSO or on behalf of one of their ASOs.
- If approved, the Office of Student Affairs and CCS guarantee that the email will be passed on to the identified students within 5 working days from receipt of the request by CCS.
- If the request is not deemed to meet the conditions for a mass email, it will be returned to the organization with reasons.

High Volume Email

- PSOs wishing to use this service must seek approval from the Office of Student Affairs. Requests from the appropriate executive member of a PSO should be forwarded to l.gatto@exec.uoguelph.ca. ASOs wishing to use this service must seek approval from the appropriate executive member of their PSO. The executive member is also responsible for forwarding the names of ASO approved lists to the Office of Student Affairs.
- CCS will provide to the appointed executive member a High Volume Email list that will include their constituents’ email addresses, no earlier than one week after the end of the add period each fall semester. The designated executive member and one other executive member will be granted posting privileges to this list. At the end of April each year, the list will be cancelled, and will need to be re-requested each year. During the spring semester, any request to send emails will be forwarded to the Office of Student Affairs for action.
- As a best practice, to avoid complaints of spam, it is recommended that only one High Volume email be sent out in a two (2) week period.
- High Volume emails will be processed after six (6) pm, so as to minimize the impact of the email service. Message can be sent to the High Volume Email lists at any time.
- All email will include a footer in each message with a link that allows recipients to opt-out of the list. This footer is automatically added to each message.
- Since common-interest clubs, such as CSA clubs, do not have a constituency which can be identified with Registrarial information, High Volume Email lists are not available. Such clubs should use Listserv lists to communicate with their members.

Listserv Lists

- Any student group that wishes to set up a Listserv list must download the student Listserv form from the CCS website and complete the required information.
- The form must then be signed by the designated executive member of the appropriate PSO.
- The requesting group (PSO or ASO) is responsible for the maintenance of the list.
- All Listservs lists are governed by the guidelines of this policy.
Guidelines

These guidelines are intended to assure that this means of communication remains reliable, and to support the community consensus that unnecessary electronic mail is unwelcome. Using best judgment and following these guidelines will help ensure that the email system and network can be used effectively and to their capacity. A refusal to abide by the guidelines could result in the student government losing Mass Email privileges, including High Volume Email and Listserv Lists.

1. The message must be in regard to University business and material in the email must conform to the University's Acceptable Use Policy. Messages cannot include:
   a. Personal messages
   b. Items for sale
   c. Jokes
   d. Chain letters
   e. Pyramid schemes or make money fast schemes
   f. Unsolicited commercial email
   g. Information of interest to only a small segment of the University community

2. The information conveyed should contain significant news value
   a. Announcements of regularly scheduled meetings and activities do not generally warrant University-wide distribution via email. Such information should be communicated via High Volume Email or a Listserv List. News that impacts a large number of people, is significant to a large percentage of the recipients and is time sensitive may be appropriate for mass distribution, especially if it is important to reach all members of a constituency even those who may have opted out of a High Volume Email or Listserv List.
   b. Student Governments should plan ahead in order to limit requests for Mass Email distribution. It is recommended that no more than one email per month be distributed by Mass Email and no more than two email messages per month be distributed by High Volume Email. Student Governments (PSOs) should co-ordinate with their clubs (ASOs) regarding email communications to their constituency to minimize the number of messages sent. It is recommended that those organizations wishing to contact their membership on a regular basis do so by creating a Listserv List. Each fall, training sessions should be arranged for the governments and clubs on how to request and manage email communications for their organization.

3. Messages must be targeted
   a. The distribution must be delivered only to those for whom it is relevant.

4. Opt-out Option
   a. Every High Volume Email and Listserv List message must provide students with an option to opt-out. This option will facilitate students receiving a minimum of unrequested messages. This opt-out message is automatically added to the end of all such messages and is not required to be manually entered. If the student government has a Mass Email it wishes to send to all their constituents (midway through the semester and after students have opted out), the email can be directed to the Associate V.P. Student Affairs for consideration as a mass email.
5. Format
   a. The message must include contact information for the receiver, clearly identifying the sender. For PSO and ASO, it is recommended that this be an organizational account. This may be in the “Reply-to:” header or field within the email message itself.
   b. The initial text of the message should indicate that it is a broadcast message and which area is sending the message. For example: “This is an informational broadcast message from the CSA”.
   c. Messages should be clear and concise – no more than one page, or approximately 250 words. Additional information may be made available via a web link in the text of the email.
   d. The inclusion of attachments in broadcast messages is not allowed because of the possibility of spreading a virus and possible incompatibility with a recipient's system.
   e. The message should be in plain text as some email readers cannot handle special characters, fonts or html.

   It should be noted that administrative communications in email carry the same legal requirements as do communications on paper. Any questions on the policy should be directed to Laura Gatto, Office of Student Affairs, l.gatto@exec.uoguelph.ca or ext. 53868.

Complaint Resolution

Any complaints regarding student organization email communications should be addressed to the Office of Student Affairs and will be resolved in a timely manner. Failure to abide by the terms of this policy and its procedures may result in the withdrawal of access to these services. Complaints will be resolved by the Office of Student Affairs and may be referred to the Judicial Committee.