

**Policy name: E-Communication Policy**

**Revision 1 Approved by RIAM Governing Body 7<sup>th</sup> April 2022**

**Revision 1 Approved by Trinity Academic Council 18<sup>th</sup> May 2022**

## 1. Context

- 1.1 E-Communication, in the context of this policy, is any form of computerised electronic communications that you use in the performance of your duties as an employee. This includes but is not limited to, email, SMS/texts, communication on social networking sites, Instant Messaging (IM) such as Facebook messenger, Skype, WhatsApp, Moodle and Teams. While it is recognised that these tools are important to the normal conduct of business, they also carry considerable risks when used inappropriately. The intention of this e-communication policy is to help staff (academic and non-academic) to use these forms of communication properly in the course of their duties, to reduce the risk of intentional or inadvertent misuse, and to ensure that official information transferred via e-communication is properly handled. For that reason, the use of electronic forms of communication on behalf of RIAM is governed by acceptable usage as stipulated by this policy.
- 1.2 This policy covers the use of e-communication services by all employees of the organisation. Contract and temporary staff using the organisation's computing resources must also be made aware of, and comply with, this policy.

## 2. Purpose

- 2.1 RIAM is committed to appropriate and effective e-communication with stakeholders both internally and externally.
- 2.2 This policy has been developed to ensure that all stakeholder e-communication is appropriate, timely, and relevant for the professional benefit of staff and students.
- 2.2 This policy is concerned with managing the transfer of information owned by or relating to RIAM and by the staff of RIAM acting in their official capacity.
- 2.3 All staff (Academic and non-Academic) must be aware of the relevant laws, professional expectations and guidelines for interacting with staff, students, and other RIAM Stakeholders the legislation and regulations that are set out in Section 7 of the Policy.
- 2.4 The objectives of this policy are.
- To define the responsibilities of staff and representatives when communicating on behalf of RIAM.
  - To ensure the tone and message of the communication is consistent and appropriate.
  - To minimise the potential negative impact to RIAM, its staff, and students, as a result of incidents or violations.

### 3. Scope

- 3.1 This policy applies to faculty, staff, students, and all others granted use of RIAM information or related assets ('service users') and defines their responsibility for the protection and appropriate use of e-communication on behalf of RIAM.
- 3.2 Within the context of this policy, e-communication refers to all information processed and communicated electronically while acting on behalf of RIAM.

### 4. Policy

#### 4.1 Roles and Responsibilities

- 4.1.1 This policy outlines the responsibility of all staff in maintaining good e-communication practices. It is important to determine which form of e-communication is appropriate for the message you are conveying and who you are communicating with. All e-communication should be:
- Audience specific and appropriate. Staff should not engage with direct e-communication with Junior RIAM students. All e-communication with the Junior RIAM cohort should be with parent/guarantor only. Students who have moved from Junior RIAM to Adult Division may be communicated with directly once Adult Division status has been confirmed by the relevant RIAM office.
  - For e-communication with staff or tertiary students (not limited to but including email, WhatsApp, Facebook Messenger, Text, Skype, Moodle and MS Teams) tone should be appropriate, clear and concise and relating to the business of the RIAM only. Appropriate tone, for business or academic communications, should be direct, sincere, respectful and discriminatory language, the use of contracted words or emoticons should be avoided. Be friendly but maintain an appropriate level of professionalism.
  - Exam results should only be communicated via the appropriate channels from the relevant office, e.g. email or hard copy. WhatsApp should not be used to communicate exam results. Communication of exam results should be in line with RIAM data protection policy [Data Protection Act 2018](#).
  - Sensitive data should as personnel information should be encrypted and transmitted securely through a file share service such as HEAnet filesender.
- 4.1.2 This policy should be read in conjunction with the RIAM [ICT](#) and [Social Media](#) policies where there is additional information about email, security, internet usage and GDPR.
- 4.1.3 When communicating via email while acting in your capacity as an employee of RIAM you must only send emails from your @riam.ie email address.
- 4.1.4 Staff members must take responsibility for familiarising themselves with this policy, the ICT policy, and the social media policy, and use e-communication according to these policies.

4.1.5 Staff should also be informed of the regulations required by each of the third party platforms (not limited to but including email, WhatsApp, Facebook Messenger, Text, Skype, Moodle and MS Teams) that should be followed when using these services, please refer to section **5.12**.

## 4.2 Risks

4.2.1 The internet is the medium for external email and e-communication. Because of its design the internet cannot guarantee security or message integrity. Many risks are attached to sending of written e-communication including the following:

- Messages to a particular addressee may be intercepted, viewed by other persons in the addressee organisation, forwarded without your knowledge, altered, or cut and pasted into another e-mail or medium without authority.
- A message may go to persons other than the intended recipient. If the e-mail or message contains confidential or commercially sensitive information, this could be damaging to this organisation.
- E-mails should be regarded as potentially public information. There is, therefore, a heightened risk of legal liability for the sender, the recipient and the organisations for which they work.
- E-mail and e-communication is a form of publishing. Therefore, defamation laws apply to e-mails.
- Personal data contained in e-mails and other forms of e-communication may be accessible under data protection legislation. Furthermore, e-mails to Government and other public bodies may be accessible under freedom of information legislation.
- E-mail and e-communication is speedy and therefore messages written in haste, or written carelessly, can be sent without the opportunity to check or rephrase. This could give rise to legal liability on the organisation's part, such as claims for defamation, etc.
- Information contained in, or attached to, e-mails may belong to others and there may be copyright implications in sending or receiving them without permission.
- An e-mail message may legally bind the organisation contractually in certain instances without the proper authority being obtained from the relevant office, line manager, finance office or faculty head.
- E-mail messages can carry computer viruses that are particularly dangerous to the organisation's computer operations.

You are required to be conscious of the above risks and to ensure that, in your use of e-mail or other organisation resources, you do not expose the organisation to any such risks.

## 4.3 Breaches

4.3.1 In transmitting any form of e-communication staff are not allowed to:

- Circulate joke mail, chain letters, internally or externally
- Put anything in writing you would not want someone to see
- Harass or intimidate another person, or broadcast messages not relevant to the business of RIAM or send unwanted messages or mail
- Communicate to another in any way that could cause harm or distress, embarrassment, or cause unwanted attention. There must be no personal attacks, inclusive of those based on gender, race, national origin, ethnicity, religion, disability, sexual orientation or membership of the travelling community
- Gain access to or distribute pornographic materials
- Use vulgar or abusive language

- Save, download or transmit sexual, racist, profane or otherwise graphic material.
- Use e-communication, when acting in your capacity as an employee of RIAM, in a way that would be damaging to the organisation.

4.3.2 If any breach of this policy is observed, then disciplinary action up to and including dismissal may be taken in line with the staff disciplinary procedure. This policy is not exhaustive, in situations that are not expressly governed by this policy you must ensure that your use of e-communication when acting in your capacity as an employee of RIAM is appropriate and consistent with this policy and your responsibilities towards RIAM.

## 5. Legislation and Regulation

- 5.1 [Copyright and other Intellectual Property Law Provisions Act 2019](#)
- 5.2 [Data Protection Act 2018](#).
- 5.3 [Child Trafficking and Pornography Act 1998](#).
- 5.4 [Child Trafficking and Pornography \(Amendment\) Act 2004](#).
- 5.5 [Criminal Damages Act 1991](#).
- 5.6 [Defamation Act 2009](#).
- 5.7 [Employment Equality Acts](#) (consolidated)
- 5.8 [Equal Status Act 2000](#).
- 5.9 [Equality Act 2004](#).
- 5.10 [Prohibition of Incitement to Hatred Act 1989](#).
- 5.11 [General Data Protection Regulation \(GDPR\) 2018](#).
- 5.12 [MS Teams Regulations](#) [WhatsApp Regulations](#) [Facebook Messenger Regulations](#) [Skype Regulations](#) [Moodle Standards](#)

## 6. Related Documents

- 6.1 Staff Disciplinary Policy.
- 6.2 Staff Grievance and Mediation Policy.
- 6.3 ICT Policy
- 6.4 Social Media Policy
- 6.5 Privacy Policy
- 6.6 Privacy Statement

## 7. Review

7.1 This policy will be reviewed on a three year cycle, or as required to take into account changes in the law and the experience of the policy in practice.

**Next Review: Academic Year 2024/2025**

Approved by RIAM Governing Body 07/04/2022

Approved by Trinity Academic Council 18/05/2022

## Appendix: Acknowledgment of the RIAM E-Communications Policy

This form is used to acknowledge receipt of, and compliance with, the RIAM E-Communications Policy.

### Procedure

Complete the following steps:

1. Read the E-Communications policy
2. Sign and date in the spaces provided below
3. Return this page to HR

Your signature indicates that you have read the RIAM E-Communications policy. Signing this document does not mean that you agree with each and every provision of the policy. However, it does mean that you will abide by the regulations set forth in the above policy. By signing below, I agree to the following terms:

1. I have received and read a copy of the RIAM E-Communications policy, and I understand the same.
2. I agree that I will adhere to the regulations set forth in the E-Communications policy.

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Employee/Student signature:

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Employee/Student name (printed):

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Date: