



Information Services & Technology | West Chester University  
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# West Chester University Policy on Acceptable Use of Information Technology Resources and Systems

## I. Purpose

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The purpose of this policy is to establish parameters of acceptability for use of the University computing facilities and resources by University faculty, staff, students, and other WCU network users.

## II. Definitions

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### A. Acceptable Use

Use of University's computing facilities and resources must be consistent with the mission of the University and all applicable laws and policies. For use to be acceptable, it must demonstrate awareness and sensitivity towards the intent of the University in granting users' access, the co-existing privileges of other users, privacy interests and freedom from harassment or annoyance, the intellectual property rights of others, and the ownership and confidentiality of data.

## III. Policy

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### A. General Policy

Access to the University's computing and information network facilities and resources is a privilege granted solely to the University's faculty, staff, students, and those other individuals who have been approved for special accounts. The intent of the University in granting access to individuals is to support the academic mission of the University, to share information and ideas, and to manage its administrative and service operations and activities. Obtaining and maintaining an electronic account is a privilege, not a right. All users must show responsibility and proper judgment, as well as comport with the framework of acceptability in order to maintain the integrity of these facilities and resources for all users. While the University respects the individual's right to free speech and free expression, it is expected that the use of the system will take place in accordance with the aforementioned definition of "Acceptable Use" and demonstrate respect for all members of the campus community. The University reserves the right to limit or revoke electronic account privileges for misuse or abuse of those privileges. Agreement to abide by this policy is a condition of acceptance to use the University's computing and information network facilities and resources.

### B. Specific Policy Considerations

1. **Protecting Data:** The information of the University is one of its most valuable assets. Information must be safeguarded for reasons of data integrity, confidentiality, and availability. The following rules must be observed:
  - a. Never share a password with another person.
  - b. Never attempt to discover or use another individual's password or network ID.
  - c. Never attempt to circumvent data protection schemes or uncover security loopholes.
  - d. Never attempt to monitor another user's data communications, or attempt to read, copy, change, delete or transmit another's user files or software.

- e. Never attempt to gain unauthorized access to remote computers.
  - f. Always protect data media (diskettes, Flash drives, DVD's, etc.) by securing them immediately after use.
  - g. Always back-up data regularly.
  - h. Properly log out of sessions.
  - i. Monitor access to accounts; if a user suspects that his/her access codes have been compromised or that there has been unauthorized activity on his/her accounts, he/she is to report it and change access codes immediately.
2. E-mail: University e-mail account holders can generally expect that the content of e-mail files residing in their user accounts will be treated as confidential by the University. The University does not routinely examine these files or monitor their content. Under certain circumstances, however, e-mail can lose its confidentiality. It can be lost if the University is compelled by court order to be released, by signed release from the user, if the files are transmitted by the user to others and user custody is lost, or when such information is deemed by University officials to be of evidentiary interest to a disciplinary investigation. Under these specific circumstances, e-mail privacy cannot be guaranteed by the University. Users should be cognizant of the lack of expectation of privacy under these circumstances. The acceptable use of email is required by all Users. The use of email is a privilege which may be revoked for abusive conduct. Therefore, Users must adhere to the following guidelines:
- a. Never use your account to infringe upon the rights of another person.
  - b. Never access, possess, or distribute electronic materials containing computer worms or viruses, electronic chain mail, and advertisements for commercial enterprises.
  - c. Never access, possess, or distribute electronic materials that may lead to the injury of others and/or lead the prosecution for violation of law, including, but not limited to, defamatory, fraudulent, pornographic, or harassing materials.
  - d. Always think before sending e-mail, especially if angry or upset. E-mail is difficult to retrieve at best and is never retrievable if already opened by the receiving party.
  - e. Always delete e-mail that does not require preservation.
  - f. Always remember that when the confidentiality of a message is critical, there is no substitute for face-to-face communication.
  - g. Always remember that e-mail messages can easily be forwarded or redistributed to others. Custody lost is an open door to privacy lost.
3. Ownership and Use of Computing and Information Technology Facilities and Resources: University information technology facilities and resources may be acquired by the University through lease, purchase, license, loan, or other agreement. Facilities and resources may include computers, accounts, workstations, peripherals, networks, communication devices, switches, software programs, and systems, as well as related devices and hardware and telecommunications equipment. Ownership lies with the institution, not the user. The University has established the following rules associated with the use of its computing and information technology facilities and resources. They must be observed:
- a. Never run or install a program that could result in damage to or destruction of a data file, computer system or information network. The willful introduction of viruses, worms, and other malicious software are expressly prohibited.
  - b. Never be wasteful of computing or information network resources or unfairly monopolize these resources. Waste in the form of examples such as unauthorized mass mailings, chain mail, unnecessary printing output, or creating unnecessary network traffic are expressly prohibited.

- c. Never attempt to modify a program or diskette that the University supplies for use.
  - d. Never engage in behavior that could impair or impact the operation of computers, terminals, peripherals or networks. Acts such as tampering with the LAN, the high-speed backbone network, or otherwise blocking communication lines or interfering with the operational readiness of a computer is expressly prohibited.
  - e. Never use the University's computers, workstations, or information networks for financial gain or other personal benefit, or for other reasons that result in a direct cost to the University.
  - f. Never abuse work hours by spending large amounts of time in pursuit of social or other nonrelated personal interests that engage the use of the University's computing and information technology facilities and resources. (Examples of this form of inappropriate use include chat rooms, sexually explicit sites, sports fantasy, and betting sites.)
  - g. Never store or attempt to download or otherwise transmit data that would constitute a violation of state or federal law or the policies of the University, the State System of Higher Education, or the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.
  - h. Installation of any software package by clients on University computers requires an original license agreement to be housed at the location of the Computer or handheld device on which the software will be installed. University employees cannot install any software on University computers and handheld devices without proper software licenses. Always abide by the terms of all software license agreements. Unauthorized copying of software is illegal and expressly prohibited.
4. Privately owned computers: Faculty, staff, students, and guests of West Chester University who provide their own computer and equipment but connect to the University's network must still abide by all aspects of the Acceptable Use Policy. In addition, there are several special areas for these users to keep in mind:
- a. **Responsibility for content:** The content of any files or services made available to others over the network is the sole responsibility of the person with ownership of and/or administrative authority over the computer providing the service. It is this person's responsibility to be aware of all applicable federal and state laws, as well as University policies. This person will be liable for any violations of these laws and policies.
  - b. **Network-intensive applications:** Any person operating a network-intensive application or a defective computer, which causes network overload, will be notified and steps will be taken to protect other users and the University network overall. This may include disconnecting the offending computer system from the network until the problem is resolved. If the condition is an imminent hazard to the University network or disrupts the activities of others, then the offending computer system or the subnet to which it is attached may be disabled without notice. This latter course of action may affect other users connected to the network.
  - c. **Responsibility for security:** Any person attaching a computer or network device to West Chester University's network is responsible for the security of the computer system and for any intentional or unintentional activities from or to those network connections.
  - d. **Wireless Equipment:** The use of any type of wireless network equipment including but not limited to wireless switches and wireless routers on the University network is strictly prohibited. Only wireless access points installed and managed by the West Chester University Information Services Division will be allowed in use on the University's network. Information Services will maintain a current list of wireless

access points available on the network. Students may use wireless laptops to connect at University hotspots in these predefined locations.

- e. **Ethernet Network:** Network services and wiring may not be modified or extended by users for any reason. This applies to all network wiring, hardware, and data jacks. Ethernet switching equipment and hubs other than those provided by the University are prohibited for use on any West Chester University network without prior written approval from the Director of Networking & Telecommunications.

## IV. Procedures

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### A. Minor Infractions

Frequently, the IT security administrator will be able to manage a minor violation by contacting the user, advising him or her of the violation, working through a solution, and obtaining user assurance that it will not happen again.

### B. Investigating Alleged Employee Serious Misuse of Computing and Information Technology Facilities and Resources

Unfortunately, from time to time, computer abuse, e-mail harassment, and other unauthorized acts do occur. When they do, they must be effectively managed to avoid recurrences. Everyone has a responsibility to report these types of acts if witnessed or suspected. Given such notice, the University has an obligation to investigate misuse of computing and information technology facilities and resources, including e-mail abuse.

1. **Reporting Suspected Misuse or Other Violation of This Policy:** Instances of alleged misuse/violation should be reported to the University's IT Help-Desk immediately. The Help-Desk will determine either to make an effort to resolve the situation or, if necessary, refer the concern to the IT security administrator for further review and action.
2. **Additional Notifications:** Anytime employee misconduct is alleged, the chief human resources officer and the Department of Public Safety must be notified immediately by the IT security administrator. If the allegation might reasonably lead to a criminal complaint, the Department of Public Safety will take over the investigation. If the allegation relates to possible sexual harassment or another form of illegal discrimination, the chief human resources officer will notify the social equity director immediately. Notice to the employee who is the subject of the investigation shall be made by the appropriate University official after consultation with the chief human resources officer.
3. **Decision to Investigate:** The IT security administrator, in consultation with the chief human resources officer and other appropriate University officials, will review the concern and determine how to best approach the conduct of a thorough investigation prior to investigatory action being undertaken by the campus.
4. **Privacy Interests:** Every reasonable effort will be made by the IT security administrator and any others involved in an investigation pursuant to this policy to balance a minimization of intrusion upon employee privacy interests while responsibly conducting a complete investigation. PASSHE legal counsel will be consulted if questions arise in this regard.
5. **Collective Bargaining Agreements:** The chief human resources officer will be consulted regarding employee collective bargaining rights relating to investigations and disciplinary meetings if the subject of a complaint is a member of a collective bargaining unit.
6. **Suspension of User Privileges:** There may be circumstances where the nature of an allegation is so serious as to require a suspension of privileges while an investigation is being conducted. Under these circumstances, both the employee and the union (where applicable) will be notified at the time of the suspension. Suspension of user privileges pending the outcome of an investigation is not a disciplinary action.

### C. Investigating Alleged Student Serious Misuse of Computing and Information Technology Facilities and Resources

Unfortunately, from time to time computer abuse, e-mail harassment, and other unauthorized acts do occur. When they do they must be effectively managed to avoid recurrences. Everyone has a responsibility to report these types of acts if witnessed or suspected. Given such notice, the University has an obligation to investigate misuse of computing and information technology facilities and resources, including e-mail abuse.

1. **Reporting Suspected Misuse or Other Violation of this Policy:** Instances of alleged misuse/violation should be reported to the University's IT Help-Desk immediately. The Help-Desk will determine either to make an effort to resolve the situation or, if necessary, refer the concern to the IT security administrator for further review and action.
2. **Additional Notifications:** Anytime student misconduct is alleged, the director of judicial affairs and Department of Public Safety must be notified immediately by the IT security administrator. If the allegation might reasonably lead to a criminal complaint, the Department of Public Safety will take over the investigation. If the allegation relates to possible sexual harassment or another form of illegal discrimination, the judicial affairs director will notify the social equity director immediately. Notice to the student who is the subject of the investigation shall be made by the appropriate University official after consultation with the judicial affairs director.
3. **Decision to Investigate:** The IT security administrator, in consultation with the judicial affairs director and other appropriate University officials, will review the concern and determine how to best approach the conduct of a thorough investigation prior to investigatory action being undertaken by the campus.
4. **Privacy Interests:** Every reasonable effort will be made by the IT security administrator and any others involved in an investigation pursuant to this policy to balance a minimization of intrusion upon student privacy interests while responsibly conducting a complete investigation. PASSHE legal counsel will be consulted if questions arise in this regard.
5. **Suspension of User Privileges:** There may be circumstances where the nature of an allegation is so serious as to require a suspension of privileges while an investigation is being conducted. Under these circumstances, the student will be notified at the time of the suspension. Suspension of user privileges pending the outcome of an investigation is not a disciplinary action.

### D. Outside Investigations

Occasionally, requests from local, state, or federal agencies will be made to investigate or provide information about technology-related resources. These could include but are not limited to server logs, e-mail transactions, or user information. These requests will be routed through either the Department of Public Safety or the Office of Information Security. Once a request is made to either department, the other respective department will be notified as well, unless it would compromise the integrity of the investigation.

### E. Disciplinary Consequences

Verified, serious misuse or repeated, minor infractions of this policy will result in disciplinary action. The typical form of disciplinary action for noncriminal offenses is loss or restriction of privileges, although other forms of discipline that would be more appropriate under the circumstances are possible. Under normal circumstances, disciplinary actions will be issued by the department director or by the University official charged with that responsibility as part of the collective bargaining relationship.

## F. Statutory Violations

Some instances of misuse may also rise to the level of violation of the Commonwealth's unfair trade practice, consumer protections and telecommunications laws, the Crimes Code of Pennsylvania and a variety of other state and federal laws. They include prohibitions against such conduct as disruption of services, computer theft, computer trespass, distribution of viruses, unlawful transmission of e-mail, exploitation of children via the Internet, or unsolicited or misleading transmission of commercial e-mail, faxes, or mobile telephone messaging systems. Further information or copies of these statutes may be obtained from the IT security administrator.

Note: Users are advised to seek clarification of any aspects of this policy that are unclear to them before questionable acts are undertaken. Users who have questions should contact the University's IT security administrator.