



Nicholls State University

Department of Information Technology

EMAIL POLICY

Effective Date: March 2019

Revised Date: November 2023

1 Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that Nicholls State University's email system, an essential platform for academic and administrative communication, is used effectively and responsibly. It seeks to guarantee that email services are available, reliable, and utilized in ways that align with the university's mission to foster educational excellence and service. This policy guides the university community in maintaining the integrity of this critical communication tool.

2 Scope

This policy governs the use of Nicholls State University email accounts, which are issued to support the roles and responsibilities of our diverse community. Applicable to:

- **Employees:** For conducting university business and academic functions.
- **Students:** As a critical resource for educational communication and official notices.
- **Affiliates and Contractors:** Where an email account is necessary for engagement with university operations.
- **Emeriti:** In recognition of their continued association with the university.
- **Retirees:** To the extent that post-retirement privileges are extended.

This policy ensures clear understanding and adherence to the guidelines that uphold the integrity and security of the university's email system.

3 General Policy

Nicholls State University recognizes the email system as a cornerstone of our academic and administrative operations. This policy is crafted to safeguard the accessibility, dependability, and suitable utilization of email services, aligning with institutional objectives.

- **Usage and Conduct:** The university's email services are a conduit for scholarly collaboration, administrative communication, and public service. As such, all users are expected to engage with this tool responsibly and professionally, adhering to the established standards of conduct.
- **Supporting the University's Mission:** Email communication is a reflection of the university's commitment to excellence. Users must ensure that their use of these services contributes positively to our educational and research endeavors and supports the university's standing in the public domain.
- **Compliance and Awareness:** All members of the university community with email access, including employees, students, affiliates, contractors, emeriti, and retirees, must be conversant with their rights and obligations as outlined in this policy. Adherence to these guidelines will help maintain the security and integrity of our communications infrastructure.

Email is an essential communication tool at Nicholls State University, crucial for furthering the University mission. This policy ensures that our email services remain reliable, secure, and are used in a manner befitting our institutional values.

All members of the university community must use email in a responsible and ethical manner, understanding that it represents the university's commitment to professionalism and excellence. By adhering to this policy, users help preserve the integrity and efficacy of our email system.

4 Email Accounts Usage and Access

4.1 General Use

The Nicholls State University email system is designated primarily for academic and administrative purposes to support the university's mission. While incidental personal use is permitted, it must not compromise the efficiency, integrity, or security of university operations.

- **Professionalism:** Users are expected to maintain a professional tone in all communications sent from their university email account. This upholds the university's standards and reflects respect for the academic and administrative environment.
- **Sensitive Information:** Users should exercise discretion when sending sensitive information. Emails should be composed with an understanding that email is not a private medium, and sensitive content is best shared through more secure channels when possible.
- **Network Performance:** Personal use should not impede network resources or interfere with the university's operational capabilities.
- **Affiliation and Access:** Email privileges are extended based on the user's active role within the university. Upon the end of this affiliation, users are required to cease the use of their university email account and may not export or transfer email contents to another account.

By adhering to this policy, users help ensure that the email system remains a reliable and effective tool for the entire university community.

4.2 Faculty and Staff

Nicholls State University acknowledges the lasting contributions of its faculty and staff by providing continued email access to support their ongoing engagement with the university community.

- **Active Employment:** Faculty and staff are allowed full access to the university email system throughout their tenure at the university.

- **Retirement:** Upon retirement, standard faculty and staff email access will conclude 30 days post-retirement. This allows for ample time to manage the transition of communications to a personal email address while ensuring network security.

- **Emeritus Faculty:** In recognition of their distinguished service, emeritus faculty are granted continued access to their university email accounts post-retirement. To ensure these accounts are used in a manner that aligns with university standards:
 - **Annual Review:** Emeritus faculty email accounts will be subject to an annual review to verify that they are active and being used in a manner consistent with university policies.
 - **Security Compliance:** The review will also ensure that accounts meet the university's security protocols to protect against unauthorized access and ensure the integrity of the university's information systems.

- **Termination of Employment:** In instances of non-retiree employment termination, email access will end at the close of the business day on the date of departure, aligning with security best practices.

This policy is designed to respect the contributions of our faculty and staff while maintaining the necessary safeguards for our digital communication systems.

4.3 Students

Nicholls State University provides email services to students as an essential academic resource and a means of official communication throughout their educational journey.

- **Access During Enrollment:** Students are granted full access to the university email system during their period of enrollment, which supports their educational activities and university-related communication.
- **Post-Graduation:** To assist with the transition after graduation, students will retain access to their university email for a period of six months. This allows recent graduates to maintain contact with the university network and manage the migration of their contacts and communications to a personal or professional email account.
- **Separation from University:** Students who do not graduate will lose email access immediately upon separation from the university. This measure is in place to ensure the security and proper allocation of university resources.
- **Email Retention:** Students are advised to archive any important emails or contacts prior to the termination of their access to avoid loss of critical information.

The university encourages students to utilize their email accounts for academic growth, professional development, and staying informed about campus life and resources.

4.4 Contract Employees, Affiliates, and Other Exceptions

Nicholls State University provides email access to contract employees, affiliates, and other individuals when such access is essential for university-related communication and representation. All proper documentation and approvals must be granted prior issuance of the email account.

- **Contract Employees:** Individuals under contract with the university may be granted an email account to facilitate official university business. This access is directly tied to the term of the contract, and accounts are reviewed in conjunction with the contract renewal process.
- **Affiliates:** Affiliates with a direct and active role in university operations may receive an email account to support their collaboration with university staff and faculty. These accounts are subject to review to ensure they are used in accordance with university policies and objectives.
- **Other Exceptions:** On a case-by-case basis, the university may provide email access to individuals who require it to represent or conduct business on behalf of the university effectively. Such exceptions will be evaluated for necessity and risk.
- **Review Process:** Email access for all such accounts is reviewed on an as-needed basis to ensure ongoing necessity and compliance with university standards. Access may be modified or revoked if it is no longer deemed necessary or if misuse is detected.

This policy aims to enable necessary communication and representation for the university while maintaining the security and integrity of the university's digital resources.

5 Prohibited Use

The Nicholls State University email system is a critical tool for maintaining our community's ethical and legal standards of communication. To uphold the integrity and reputation of the University, the following activities are strictly prohibited:

- **Creation or Distribution of Disruptive Messages:** Users must not send messages that could significantly interrupt university operations or infringe upon the rights of others.
- **Unlawful Communications:** Any content that violates laws, including those related to harassment, discrimination, or copyright infringement, is forbidden.
- **Unauthorized Access:** Attempting to gain unauthorized access to another individual's email account is a violation of university policy and privacy expectations.
- **Commercial Use:** The email system must not be used for personal commercial gain, except as explicitly authorized by university policy.
- **Political Activities:** Engaging in partisan political activities or lobbying that implies university endorsement is not permitted.

Users must also exercise caution and discretion when considering the transmission of sensitive information via email. Think critically about the necessity and appropriateness of sending such information, recognizing that email is not an infallible medium of communication and that the University's ability to ensure the security of this information is limited.

Violation of these rules may result in revocation of email privileges and further disciplinary action in accordance with university procedures.

6 Security and Privacy

Nicholls State University is dedicated to maintaining secure and private email services. While we strive to ensure the highest level of protection, users must recognize that no system can guarantee absolute security.

- **User Responsibility:** Users are entrusted with the security of their own accounts and are expected to exercise vigilance when sending sensitive information via email. Before transmitting such information, consider the potential risks and whether email is the appropriate medium. Strong password management, not sharing credentials, and staying alert to suspicious communications are key responsibilities for each user.
- **Privacy Expectations:** The University reserves the right to monitor email communications as needed to maintain the integrity of our systems and compliance with our policies. However, such monitoring will be conducted with due respect to user privacy, within the bounds of applicable laws and university regulations.

- **Security Protocols:** Our email systems employ industry-standard protocols to secure the transmission and storage of data. We utilize encryption, perform regular security audits, and require multi-factor authentication to mitigate unauthorized access risks.

7 Monitoring

Nicholls State University reserves the right to monitor email traffic and account activity to ensure the integrity of our email systems and compliance with our policy framework. Such oversight is crucial for the protection of our digital environment and the University community as a whole.

- **Scope of Monitoring:** Monitoring is limited to system-level oversight and does not typically involve reading individual emails. It includes checking for patterns indicative of spam, phishing attempts, or other security threats.
- **Notification:** While the University may exercise this right without prior notice, we are committed to transparency and will inform the community when policy changes affect monitoring practices.
- **Respect for Privacy:** When individual account monitoring is necessary, it will be conducted with the utmost respect for personal privacy and in accordance with applicable laws and university regulations.
- **User Awareness:** Users are encouraged to be mindful of their privacy and to understand that while the University strives to respect user confidentiality, complete privacy in email communications cannot be guaranteed.

This policy aims to strike a balance between the necessary oversight to maintain a secure and functional email system and the privacy rights of our users. Any changes to this policy will be communicated to ensure that all users are aware of their rights and responsibilities.

8 Enforcement

Nicholls State University takes the adherence to its Email Policy seriously. Violations of this policy are subject to a review process that respects the rights of the individual while maintaining the integrity of the University's systems and standards.

Consequences of Violations: Depending on the severity and nature of the violation, consequences may include:

- Temporary or permanent suspension of email and other technology access.
- Disciplinary action up to and including termination of employment for staff or faculty.
- Disciplinary proceedings for students in alignment with the Student Code of Conduct.
- Termination of contracts or agreements for external contractors, affiliates, or vendors.

Due Process: In all cases, the University will adhere to the principle of due process. Accused parties will have the opportunity to be heard and to respond to allegations of misconduct.

The University is committed to enforcing this policy in a way that is fair, consistent, and transparent, with the goal of protecting the community and the integrity of our communication systems.