

# 3.13.1: ICT Acceptable Use Policy

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## Introduction

RBGE provides a variety of ICT facilities to users. The purpose of this policy is to provide a summary to users of what constitutes acceptable and unacceptable use of the ICT facilities.

The purpose of RBGE's ICT facilities is to carry out tasks which support the Garden's objectives and goals. It is important that users understand that RBGE owns and is legally liable not only for the equipment and material, but also for any e-mails and downloaded Internet pages generated by, downloaded to or stored on its equipment. ICT facilities include any ICT network, service, system or device belonging to RBGE or directly connected to it.

Guidelines on good practice in using e-mail are contained in [Appendix 1](#). Some of the legal issues which relate to this policy are provided as background in [Appendix 2](#). Although this document gives specific guidance, there are two principles which should guide any acceptable use of the facilities:

- Use must be lawful
- Use must not be to the detriment of other people

## Applicability

This document applies to all users of RBGE ICT facilities unless separate policies and procedures are in place. The term user includes individuals employed by RBGE in any capacity, volunteers, students, work placement appointments and any others (e.g. contractors, visitors) who may use the facilities. Line managers should bring this policy to the attention of all users in their area.

## Personal Use of the ICT Facilities

Users are permitted to make limited personal use of the ICT facilities in their own time.

If users are studying for any form of qualification with RBGE support they may use the facilities for research and preparation. You must do this in your own time and ensure that you have the approval of your line manager. Students will also be permitted to use the facilities during normal study.

It is recommended that users make use of a web-based provider to access their personal e-mail account. Users may use the RBGE e-mail system to exchange e-mails, but should include the word "personal" in the subject line, otherwise it will be assumed to be a business mail.

## Unacceptable Use

A number of examples of what constitutes misconduct or misuse of ICT facilities are outlined below. This list is not exhaustive and each case is treated on its merits but any of these may, depending on circumstances, be treated as misconduct liable to disciplinary action. However, those marked \* are more likely to be treated as serious disciplinary offences and could lead to dismissal for gross misconduct:

- Attempting to gain or actively gain access to an inappropriate Internet site and obtain or attempt to obtain pornographic, obscene or other offensive material and generate, store, distribute, or display such material. An inappropriate site and offensive material includes content of a sexually explicit or sexually orientated nature; material that would offend others on the basis of age, disability, sex, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race (which includes colour, nationality and ethnic or national origins), sexual orientation,

religion or belief, or because someone is married or in a civil partnership; and, material relating to illegal activities or activities otherwise prohibited\*

- Disclosing your ICT password to someone else to use\*
- Accessing, or attempting to obtain access to, parts of the ICT network which you are not authorised to access\*
- Gaining such access with the intention of modifying data or programs is a more serious criminal offence\*
- Generating or sending messages in a way that makes them appear to have come from someone else\*
- Sending messages which are abusive, offensive, libellous or a nuisance\*
- Generating and/or distributing chain e-mail\*
- Using the ICT facilities for private commercial activity\*
- Contravening rules for personal use of ICT facilities\*
- Disseminating or printing copyright materials in violation of copyright laws\*
- Getting involved in user groups or discussions which are politically sensitive or potentially controversial\*
- Using the Internet for political activity\*
- Loading any software for personal use onto your computer or any other part of the facilities (for example games, CDs from a computer magazine or shareware from the Internet)\*

#### **Accidental Access**

Internet Users can connect accidentally to websites that contain illegal or offensive material. If this happens to you, you should disconnect from the site immediately and inform your line manager and the ICT Helpdesk. If users receive an e-mail which they consider may contain pornographic or offensive material, they should close the document, advise their line manager and contact the ICT Helpdesk so that steps may be taken to avoid receiving further similar mail from the same source.

#### **Authority to send information**

Users may not send (without appropriate permission) confidential information such as finance or HR documents outside the Garden in an external e-mail or over the Internet. If in doubt about whether material is regarded as sensitive, staff should seek advice from the relevant Head of Department about its transmission. Users may not use the facilities to send information to a third party where you are not authorised to do so.

#### **Monitoring use of the system**

ICT and HR are responsible for monitoring and/or recording use of ICT systems (including internet and e-mail activity) to ensure compliance with ICT policies. Many Internet sites keep a record of visitors to the site for marketing purposes and that this record could become public. Users will need to ensure that they do not visit any sites where such publicity could lead to embarrassment to RBGE. Any evidence of misuse will be investigated by ICT and HR.

Any possible cases of misuse will be drawn by the Head of ICT to the attention of the Head of HR who will decide in consultation with line management what action to take (see section 3.8 of the staff handbook. **Attempts to access, download or transmit pornographic, racist or offensive material will be treated as gross misconduct and could lead to dismissal.** In some cases it may be necessary to involve the police, if there is prima facie evidence that a criminal offence has been committed.

If line managers are concerned that inappropriate use is being made of the system then this should be discussed with the person concerned, referring to the ICT policies for guidance. If this approach is not feasible or has already been explored with the individual then line managers can approach HR to request investigation of the usage. Similarly if you believe that a colleague outwith your

responsibility is misusing the system, or that your PC has been misused, you should contact HR immediately.