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UNIVERSITY OF WEST GEORGIA

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Next Review N/A

Area Administration/ Governance (Procedures)
Responsible Party University Communications and Marketing

University Electronic Signature and Use

Authority for Procedure granted by UWG PL #1003 Online Resource Ownership, Control, and Use.

A. Purpose

The University of West Georgia (UWG) recognizes electronic mail (email) as the primary communication method for internal and external audiences. The purpose of this procedure is to establish standards for the consistent use of UWG email signatures and related email communications to ensure institutional branding, professional representation, accessibility, information security, and compliance with applicable University policies and legal requirements.

This procedure should be read in conjunction with related University policies and procedures, including UWG PL #1003 and the *Use of University Mass Email System* procedure. This procedure applies to all @westga.edu accounts used for University business and to all individuals utilizing UWG Technology Resources.

Use of University Technology Resources constitutes acknowledgment and acceptance of this procedure.

B. Authority and Representation

Email signatures are intended solely for identification and contact purposes. The inclusion of a title, department name, credential, logo, or other signature element does not confer authority to bind the University, enter into agreements, approve expenditures, or otherwise obligate the University. Likewise, email signatures do not constitute an official University endorsement, approval, or position unless such authority has been expressly authorized under applicable law, Board of Regents or University policy, or delegated authority.

C. Email Signature Standards

1. University Electronic Signature (E-Signature)

UWG Electronic Signatures (E-Signature) are generated through an automated E-Signature Builder, which applies approved branding, formatting, and required disclaimers.

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2. Individual Employee Signatures

a. Required Elements for Original Messages

In the appropriate order, the Original Message signature block, *at a minimum*, must include:

- **Full Name**
- **Job title**
- **School/College/Unit/Department** *(as applicable)*
- **Name of Institution** (i.e., University of West Georgia)
- **Street Address, City, State, and Zip Code** *(optional if using 1601 Maple Street)*
- **Direct Employee or Unit Telephone Number**
- **Confidentiality Statement:**
  "*This e-mail is intended solely for the addressee and may contain confidential information. If you are not the addressee, please do not save, print, or retransmit, except to return to the sender.*"

Example - Basic Signature

John Smith, Jr.

Administrative Assistant

Department of Research

University of West Georgia

1601 Maple Street, Carrollton, GA 30118

Phone: 678-839-xxxx

This e-mail is intended solely for the addressee and may contain confidential information. If you are not the addressee, please do not save, print, or retransmit except to return to the sender.

b. Optional Elements

Optional signature block elements may include:

- **Pronouns**
- **Degree(s)**
- **UWG Graduate Year**
- **UWG-issued Mobile Number**
- **Departmental Web address** *(hyperlinked with descriptive text)*

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Important Notice: *Employees who voluntarily publish their **personal mobile number** in their signature block acknowledge that the number and any University business communications conducted on the personal device may be subject to disclosure under the Georgia Open Records Act (O.C.G.A. § 50-18-72 et seq.).*

c. Required Elements for Reply Message

To maintain a professional appearance and reduce unnecessary repetition in email conversations while ensuring recipients can identify and contact the sender, Reply Message signatures must include, *at a minimum*:

- **Full Name**
- **Job title**
- **Direct Employee or Unit Telephone Number**

3. Generic and Departmental Accounts

Generic, shared, or departmental email accounts (e.g., info@westga.edu, finaid@westga.edu) must utilize a modified signature format to maintain a unified institutional identity and ensure continuity of service.

a. Required Signature Elements

The required signature elements applicable to both Original and Reply Messages for a generic account are as follows:

- **Department, Office, or Unit Name**
- **Name of Institution** (i.e., University of West Georgia)
- **Departmental Web Address** *(hyperlinked with descriptive text)*
- **Confidentiality Statement:**
  "*This e-mail is intended solely for the addressee and may contain confidential information. If you are not the addressee, please do not save, print, or retransmit, except to return to the sender.*"

b. Sign-Off and Accountability Requirements

Employees shall include a **plain-text sign-off** above the automated signature block (e.g., "Processed by: Jane Smith" or "Processed by: Registry Team") to provide individual accountability for communications sent from shared accounts.

4. Prohibited Content

To maintain the professional image of the University and protect University resources, the following items are strictly prohibited within signature blocks:

- **Personal quotes, opinions, religious or political statements.**
- **Unauthorized images, logos, icons, cartoons, family/pet photographs, or similar content.**
- **Custom animations, backgrounds, flashing graphics, or non-standard brand fonts.**
- **Social media icons or links not approved by** University Communications and Marketing **(UCM).**

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5. Accessibility and Branding Requirements

a. Accessibility Standards

All signature templates and related guidelines must comply with the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.1 Level AA standards to ensure accessibility for users relying on Assistive Technologies.

b. Branding Standards

University Communications and Marketing (UCM) is authorized to establish and maintain email signature standards and branding requirements consistent with University identity guidelines. For more information, visit the University Brand Center WorkWest webpage (SSO login required).

6. Compliance and Enforcement

a. University Review Authority

The University reserves the right to centrally review, audit, modify, or update employee email signatures to maintain compliance with branding requirements, accessibility standards, and applicable laws.

b. Supervisor Responsibilities

Supervisors are responsible for notifying employees of noncompliant signatures and identifying the specific element requiring correction.

c. Corrective Action

Employees must correct identified deficiencies within five business days of notification. Continued noncompliance may be referred to the Office of Human Resources for appropriate action.

Definitions

Assistive Technology - Under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), refers to tools that help individuals with disabilities perform tasks that would otherwise be difficult or impossible. These tools support accessibility across digital interfaces, physical spaces, communication, and mobility. Examples include, but are not limited to, devices and software such as screen readers (JAWS, NVDA), refreshable Braille displays, speech recognition tools, hearing loop systems, switch controls, and mobility devices like wheelchairs and powered options, all of which help people with disabilities access digital and physical environments.

Generic / Departmental Email Account - An institutional email inbox (@westga.edu) that is not assigned to a single person but is instead shared by a department, office, program, or operational unit for collective business communications.

Original Message - The initial email that starts a new conversation thread, containing full contextual information, routing details, and the primary body of correspondence.

Personally Identifiable Information (PII) - any information that can be used to identify an individual, either directly or indirectly. This includes names, identification numbers, addresses, and other data linked to a person, regardless of their citizenship or affiliation with the institution.

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- **Sensitive Personally Identifiable Information (Sensitive PII)** - a subset of PII that, if disclosed without authorization, could cause significant harm, embarrassment, disruption, or unfairness to the individual, such as Social Security numbers or immigration identification numbers. Sensitive PII requires stricter protection and handling due to the increased risk if compromised.

Reply Message - Any subsequent response or message sent within an ongoing email thread that builds upon a previously established "Original Message."

Technology Resources - University-owned, leased, licensed, managed, or authorized computers, mobile devices, software, applications, databases, cloud services, networks, email systems, communication systems, storage systems, and related information technology services.

Technology resources include, but are not limited to:

- Desktop computers, laptops, tablets, smartphones, printers, scanners, and servers;
- Wired and wireless networks, internet services, VPNs, and telecommunications systems;
- Email systems, messaging platforms, videoconferencing tools, and collaboration platforms;
- Enterprise applications, databases, software, and cloud-based services;
- Learning management systems and academic technology platforms;
- Data storage systems, backup systems, and file-sharing services;
- Cybersecurity tools, identity and access management systems, and monitoring systems; and
- University-owned, licensed, or authorized digital information and data.

Examples: Microsoft 365, Outlook, Teams, OneDrive, Banner, Wolf Connect, campus Wi-Fi, University servers, shared drives, Zoom, cloud storage services, and University-managed databases.

Guidelines/Related material

The following are available on the University Communications and Marketing (UCM) WorkWest Webspace (SSO login required).

- UWG E-Signature Builder
- University Brand Center webpage

Approval Signatures

Step Description	Approver	Date

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