

Email Best Practices

As a member of the HSU community, you have access to a Google Apps for Education account to help you communicate and collaborate with others in support of your university business. This short document covers essential information on using your account, recommendations for getting the most out of it, and advice on how to avoid potential pitfalls.

Privacy and Access

This is a state-issued account, so there are some fundamental differences between it and a personal email account. Because your HSU mail account is sponsored by a government agency, any mail that you send and receive (as well as any saved chat logs and calendar events) may be subject to disclosure under certain specific circumstances:

- Under the Public Records Act, members of the public can request access to emails and other correspondence transacted using this account
- In the event of a possible lawsuit, you and the university may be asked to retain all emails in your account and to turn over specific search results to the legal teams involved.
- Warrants, HR investigations, IT security investigations, and subpoenae can also result in others inside or outside the University accessing your university email account.

Emails sent from your campus account to an off-campus address are no longer under the control or protection of the campus system. You should be aware that any such email may be forwarded to another third party or retained indefinitely by the recipient and therefore should not be considered protected in any way.

Personal Accounts

We strongly recommend that you establish and maintain a personal email account to use for non-work correspondence and to connect with any personal accounts (banking, online shopping, etc). That way, if your campus account needs to be accessed by others for any of the above reasons, your personal communications remain private.

Departmental Accounts

It also makes sense to set up and use a departmental email account or Google group as the published contact address for outreach activities (eg. departmentname@humboldt.edu). That account or group can be configured to be monitored by anyone you designate. That way, if an individual retires or changes position, business processes can continue uninterrupted and individuals can retain their personal accounts.

Calendars

The Google Apps for Education suite includes a calendaring function, which is very useful for collaboration and meeting scheduling. Students and faculty are provided with a tool to add all scheduled courses into the Google Calendar on the home page of myHumboldt. To protect the privacy of data entered into the calendar, Google by default only shows [free/busy](#) time; privacy levels can also be customized for specific [events](#).

Retention and Disposition of Institutional Records in Email

Some emails may qualify as institutional records, so it is helpful to regularly review email and move those that need to be retained from your mailbox to a campus file share. Examples of official records include:

- Final versions of reports
- Contracts
- Meeting minutes
- Official memoranda
- Decision papers

Drafts and discussions leading up to final versions are typically not considered records. The records custodian and data owner in your area will be able to provide more specific guidance; you can also use this [detailed decision matrix](#) to help you determine the status of a document.:.

Email Deletion Cycle

Unless there is a litigation hold in place on a given account, emails and chat records moved to the trash label will be automatically deleted after thirty days, unless you manually empty the trash earlier. If you use a third-party mail client, that application may retain a copy on your local device.

Chat History

Google Talk or Hangout sessions are captured and saved unless set to “Off the record” or “No Hangout History.” Saved chats can be reviewed by searching in:chats or checking the chat label.

Old Contact Entries

Google saves the addresses to which you have sent email in a set of “Contacts” within your account. These addresses appear as options when you go to address a new email to someone. To clean out old or erroneous addresses, go into the Contacts app, which is located in the apps grid where the calendar is, then search for and delete them.

Smart Phones

Android phones require a Google account to set up and activate all the features on your device. It's best to use a personal Google account as your primary account; you can add your HSU mail and calendar as secondary accounts, but this way you will still be able to use your phone after you separate from the campus.

Keeping Accounts After Leaving Campus

Alumni and employees retiring from the campus may retain their HSU email accounts as long as they keep them active (log in once a year and change the password as requested). Please be aware that the campus may need to change the email domain associated with those accounts in future, meaning that your abc123@humboldt.edu account may change to abc123@alumni.humboldt.edu, abc123@emeritus.humboldt.edu, or something along those lines.