The Open University Student Computing Policy

Appendix 2: The Open University Online Communications

Principles

These principles describe the way in which OU staff and students should work together online to support learning, research, administration and participation in all aspects of the University community.

**Principle 1  The benefits of 'Digital Professionalism’**

Good online communication skills cannot be assumed, but they can be learned and are essential for effective engagement in learning and work. The development of ‘digital professionalism’ and skills in online communication has positive benefits for staff, for students and for employability.

**Principle 2  Developing our skills**

We will support each other to learn, develop and enhance our online communications skills, through advice, guidance, learning resources and working together.

**Principle 3  Communicating effectively**

We will support and encourage clear and effective communication in online situations and the use of language, style and tone which is relevant and appropriate to the circumstances and the purpose of the communication.

**Principle 4  Managing our online image**

We will ensure that we are all aware of the importance of managing our digital footprint and support each other to raise awareness of the benefits of creating a positive online image and how to achieve it. We will be mindful of maintaining our own confidentiality and personal security.

**Principle 5  Freedom of speech and ideas**

We will promote the open exchange of ideas and uphold the fundamental principle of freedom of speech and thought. We acknowledge that people have the right, within the law, to hold and to express ideas that others may find challenging. We will not allow views to be presented in a way that is hostile or degrading to others.

**Principle 6  Dignity and respect**

We will treat each other with dignity and respect, even where we disagree with each other, and be sensitive to the impact our conduct may have on other students and staff. We recognise that good manners aid effective communication. We aim to be welcoming and inclusive and do not provide a platform for threats, personal abuse, derogatory comments, unreasonable behaviour that causes offence, discrimination, victimisation, bullying or harassment.
**Principle 7  Criticising others and accepting criticism**

We should be prepared to accept legitimate criticism, provided it is within the law, based on accurate facts, measured and in an appropriate forum. It is rarely appropriate for named individuals to be criticised in public or anywhere that they have no right or opportunity to reply.

**Principle 8  Confidentiality, privacy and copyright**

We will respect each other's confidentiality and privacy and we will not share personal details or distribute ideas, words and images that belong to others without their express or implied permission and without acknowledgement. We will not tolerate plagiarism or activities which encourage or enable it.

**Principle 9  Responsibility and consequences**

We will accept responsibility for our own actions and encourage others to do so. We should be aware that poor communication skills and unacceptable behaviour may have consequences.

**Principle 10  Moderation and control**

Moderators and other controllers of online communication spaces, whether they are staff or students, have a responsibility to uphold these principles. The aim of moderation or control is to provide an environment within which meaningful, relevant and effective communication can take place. Moderators' decisions should be open, transparent and consistent with any relevant guidelines, which should be available to all participants. Moderators have the right to expect reasonable decisions to be respected but must be prepared for some decisions to be challenged, through appropriate channels.