

## **NASMA Mailbase Acceptable Use Protocol**

### **Introduction**

The NASMA mailbase, hosted by jiscmail, is made available to members as a facility which allows them to find answers to difficult questions, receive information about regional and national meetings, and training events, and to provide a means of networking with other NASMA members.

We have introduced this protocol to make your experience of using the mailbase a pleasant and worthwhile one. You are asked to read this document, and adhere to its guidelines when posting messages to the mailbase.

Due to the nature of the mailbase, emails are delivered to individual members' email accounts. As a result it is not possible to simply remove a message once it has been posted to the mailbase as is often the case with online discussion forums. The content of emails on the mailbase is not routinely monitored. However, NASMA reserves the right to withdraw a members' access to the mailbase if they do not observe and adhere to this acceptable use protocol.

Whether you are a new or experienced member of this community, it is important to be aware of the conventions and points of good practice which have been developed within the online community, referred to as network etiquette or 'netiquette'.

### **Posting Guidelines**

Based on extended experience of email and mailbase use (and misuse), the following netiquette is recommended for NASMA mailbase users. Please adopt these simple points of good practice and etiquette in your use of the NASMA mailbase.

- Laws relating to written communication apply equally to email and mailbase submissions, including laws on data protection, defamation, copyright, obscenity, fraud and discrimination.
- The NASMA mailbase is a safe and secure environment for members to discuss topics and issues. Please do not forward emails sent on the mailbase, or discuss their content to non-members without first getting the consent of the original sender, or the NASMA Chairperson.
- Remember that the internet is an open world. Don't put anything in an email that you would not be happy putting on a postcard.
- When starting a new message, make effective and appropriate use of the subject field. It is important that recipients of your messages have a good

indication as to which messages to read first and which ones can be read at a later date. Using the subject field effectively can help to solve this problem.

- Restrict yourself to one topic for each message. Several short messages are usually preferable to one long message covering many separate subjects.
- Keep it short and to the point. It is best to limit yourself to five or six bullet points or a couple of paragraphs.
- Avoid the overuse of capital letters. If capital letters are used excessively then this is the email equivalent of shouting.
- Before replying to a message, consider whether all of the people on the mailbase need to see your reply.
- Don't 'flame'. Flames are messages or replies that use abusive or disrespectful language towards other participants, and should be avoided. Don't get involved in flame wars. Neither post nor respond to incendiary mail. If you are angry or upset about the message you are replying to, give yourself time to calm down before replying. Reading through your reply several times may also help. Sending a quick and angry response rarely helps and often leads to an increasingly acrimonious exchange of messages.
- Be selective in the sending of attachments. Wherever possible either include the text in the body of the email or save the file onto a web space and then send your recipient the URL (web address).
- In general it is always better to check local resources first before trying to find information via the mailbase. For example the Student Support Regulations are available on the internet, and a lot of members make use of the CPAG publications relating to Student Support & Benefits.
- Read all of a discussion in progress ('a thread') before posting replies. Avoid posting messages where content is only limited to agreement with previous posts. Content of a follow-up post should exceed quoted content.
- Your email is likely to be seen by persons who don't know you. Ensure that what you write and how you write it gives the reader the right impression - they could be your future employer! Bear in mind that messages are archived in jiscmail and can be accessed many years after they are sent.
- Use humour and sarcasm with care. Not everyone will appreciate it and without voice inflection and body language, email messages can be easily misinterpreted. It sometimes helps to make limited use of 'emoticons' such as a smiley face e.g. :-)

- Use a signature file to put your name at the end of your email automatically. It is good netiquette to keep your signature file short whilst ensuring others can contact you to respond directly, if appropriate.
- Ensure your email is going to the correct destination – with mailbases it can be easy to use the wrong email address by mistake and your message may be delivered to the wrong person or group. If you do find a message has been delivered to the wrong person, send an apology to the person or to the group.
- Take care to open a message before replying, rather than using a 'reading pane' facility, so that you can use the individual address of the member (displayed in the email header) to reply 'off-list'.
- Don't send anonymous mail or 'spoof' your address - in 99% of cases, your email can be traced back to its source.
- Don't send electronic garbage. Sending junk email, such as advertisements or other unsolicited material, to mailing lists, newsgroups, list servers or to anyone you don't know is considered 'spamming'.
- Don't send or reply to chain-letters.

Additionally, try to keep email messages short and to the point. Lengthy emails or those with large file attachments will take longer to write and longer to read, adding to the carbon emissions from computer equipment. The largest sources of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions are electricity and heat production<sup>1</sup>.

### **Privacy**

Please don't post private or personal information about people you know without asking their permission first. Please be responsible for what gets posted under your name - everything that gets posted under a personal profile will be regarded as having been posted by that person. If others have access to your machine then lock your computer each time you leave it to avoid someone posting something unpleasant attached to your profile.

### **Disclaimer**

In general, it is not possible to retrieve messages once you have sent them. Even your system administrator will not be able to get a message back once you have sent it. This means you must make sure you want the message to be sent as you have written it.

Due to the nature of the mailbase it is not possible for us to review all messages prior to them appearing on the mailbase. All messages express the views of the person sending them and not NASMA.

## **Complaints**

NASMA does not have line management responsibility for those using the mailbase and consequently will not be held responsible for the content of any messages which contravene the guidance given in this protocol.

Any complaints in relation to use of the mailbase should be directed to the NASMA Chair who will investigate by contacting all parties involved. The Executive Board will then consider the evidence and, where satisfactory evidence exists that a member has made an inappropriate posting, the member concerned may be excluded from using the mailbase facility. Complainants will be advised of the next steps they can take in seeking redress from the individual member concerned.

More information about netiquette is available at <http://rfc.net/rfc1855.html>

<sup>1</sup> United Nations Economic Commission for Europe, 2003. Accessed online at <http://www.unece.org/stats/trend/ch10.htm> (16 Oct 2007)

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