

Internet and email policy template

The Royal Australian College of General Practitioners (RACGP) has provided an internet and email policy template for general practices to adapt to the needs of their practice.

A comprehensive policy dealing with internet and email use in your general practice provides guidelines to the practice team on what is, and importantly what is not, acceptable use of the available technology.

To be effective, your practice policies should be:

- publicised and provided to all existing and new members of your practice team
 - easily accessible (eg kept in policy manuals or available on your intranet)
 - explained to team members through information and training sessions, at team meetings and during induction
 - reiterated and discussed regularly to maintain relevance
 - periodically reviewed to ensure they are current, and updated when changes are made in information security processes in your practice or to relevant legislation
 - re-issued to the practice team when updated.
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[Insert practice name] internet and email policy

Current as of: [insert date of last revision]

Introduction

Explanatory notes

Your practice internet and email policy provides guidance to your practice team on what they can do and cannot do when using the internet and email from devices provided by your practice for business purposes.

Before creating your policy you need to determine if your practice owned devices and networks are to be used only for conducting business activities or if you are going to permit limited personal use of email and internet from these devices. This policy template is specifically aimed at practices who will allow reasonable personal use of internet and email.

[Insert practice name] recognises the practice team requires access to email and the internet to assist in the efficient and safe delivery of healthcare services to our patients. [Insert practice name] supports the right of staff to have access to reasonable personal use of the internet and email communications in the workplace using the devices and networks provided by the practice.

Purpose and objectives

This policy sets out guidelines for acceptable use of internet and email by the practice team, contractors and other staff of [Insert practice name]. Internet and email is provided primarily to assist the team carry out their duties of employment.

Scope

This internet and email policy applies to the practice team, contractors and other staff of [Insert practice name] who access the internet and email on practice owned devices, including, but not limited to [list the practice owned devices which have email your practice team may access as part of their work, internet and network access this could include desk phones, smartphones, tablets, laptops, desktop computers, iPads and other tablet devices] to perform their work.

Use of the internet by the practice team, contractors and other staff is permitted and encouraged where this supports the goals and objectives of [Insert practice name] Access to the internet is a privilege and the practice team, contractors and other staff must adhere to this policy.

Violation of these policies could result in [the practice needs to determine what action will be taken if this policy is breached and outline this as part of the policy scope. Action could include:

- disciplinary and/or legal action
- termination of employment
- the practice team, contractors and other staff being held personally liable for damages caused by any violations of this policy]

All employees are required to confirm they have understood and agree to abide by this email and internet policy. [Your practice should have a process for recording the understanding and agreement of the practice team, contractors and other staff]

Policy content

The practice team, contractors and other staff may use the internet and email access provided by [insert practice name] for:

- any work and work-related purposes
- limited personal use
- more extended personal use under specific circumstances (see below)

Limited personal use of email and internet

Limited personal use is permitted where it:

[your practice should define what is considered limited personal use of internet and email which could include the following:

- infrequent and brief use
- does not interfere with the duties of the practice team, contractors and other staff
- does not interfere with the operation of your general practice
- does not compromise the security of your general practice
- does not impact on your general practice electronic storage capacity
- does not decrease your general practice network performance (eg large email attachments can decrease system performance and potentially cause system outages)
- does not incur any additional expense for your general practice
- does not violate any legislation
- does not compromise any confidentiality requirements of your general practice

Examples of what could be considered reasonable personal use could be included in your policy and could include:

- conducting a brief online bank transaction
- paying a bill
- sending a brief personal email, similar to making a brief personal phone call]

Unacceptable internet and email use

The practice team, contractors and other staff may not use internet or email access provided by [insert practice name] to:

[your practice should define what the internet and email cannot be used for and could include the following:

- creating or exchanging messages that are offensive, harassing, obscene or threatening
- visiting web sites containing objectionable (including pornographic) or criminal material
- exchanging any confidential or sensitive information held by your general practice
- creating, storing or exchanging information in violation of copyright laws
- using internet-enabled activities such as gambling, gaming, conducting a business or conducting illegal activities
- creating or exchanging advertisements, solicitations, chain letters and other unsolicited or bulk email
- playing electronic or online games in work time.

Definitions

Policy review statement

This policy will be reviewed regularly to ensure it reflects the current processes and procedures of [insert practice name] and current legislation requirements.

You can set a specific review date for your policies

Disclaimer

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