

Information

Code of Conduct

Conditions of Use and Code of Conduct for FirstClass

You must read the Conditions of Use and Code of Conduct set out below. FirstClass users are expected to abide by these and breaches may result in restrictions for offenders.

If you feel that other users are not following the Code of Conduct, a complaints procedure has been set up which is explained online in a conference named "Conditions of Use" inside the "OU Service News" conference on your desktop. The first time you use the FirstClass client, the most up-to-date versions of all these documents will automatically open for you to read.

Conditions of use for the Open University's FirstClass System

By registering on the FirstClass System each user accepts and agrees to abide by the conditions set out below. The Open University, through the Director of LTS, reserves the right to exclude from FirstClass anyone who fails to comply.

FirstClass is provided for education, research and administration. Commercial use of FirstClass is forbidden. Those using FirstClass are personally responsible for their contributions to the system (as they would be for any written communication which is sent to others) and shall indemnify the University against any liability incurred by the University (including liability in defamation and for breach of copyright), which arises out of any such contribution.

Contributions to conferences should be regarded as the intellectual property of the authors. If they are to be quoted by another person in a publication (electronic or printed), proper acknowledgment must be given.

Where the contribution of any FirstClass user to a conference incorporates material of which that user is not the author, proper acknowledgment to the author of that material shall be given in the contribution.

Contributions must not consist of, or contain, illegal or offensive material.

Any material which is considered by the Director of LTS, or a nominee to be illegal or offensive may be removed from the system. For this purpose the expressions 'illegal' and 'offensive' include (without limitation)

- Material the publication of which is defamatory

- Would infringe the copyright of a third party

- Which contravenes Data Protection legislation or the Telecommunications Act

- Material which constitutes incitement to racial hatred or which is offensive or obscene

(see also the footnote below)

The originator of any such material may be excluded by the Director of LTS from further participation in FirstClass.

Each FirstClass user undertakes that he or she will not hold the University liable for any material contributed to a conference by another person, which is defamatory of that FirstClass user.

Each individual is responsible for the security and use of their Username and password. The use of someone else's account, Username (or password) is not allowed.

Any user found using someone else's Username, or impersonating another user of the system, may be excluded by the Director of LTS from further participation in FirstClass. Any user whose account is repeatedly being used by another user may also be excluded by the Director of LTS from further participation in FirstClass.

The LTS Administrators of the FirstClass system may need to access any areas of your FirstClass account in order to investigate technical problems, in response to a complaint or through a Subject Access request. This may include a necessity to access private mail. This data may be passed to the University's Data Protection Officer(s) in response to a Subject Access request.

- FirstClass is not provided for personal purposes but if private mail messages are so used and intended to be private, they should be marked accordingly (using the message, "Sensitivity Personal" option). Any personal information in such messages, provided the facility is properly used, will not be provided in response to a subject access request. Messages sent to any conference, cannot be deemed as private personal information.

Information regarding your use of the FirstClass system will be used to generate statistics on system usage. These statistics may be used in University research or publications. Information about individuals will not be referenced in such material

without their prior consent.

All users must comply with the FirstClass Code of Conduct.

Ian Rosenbloom, Director, Learning and Teaching Solutions June 2002

Legal Footnote - Relevant legislation includes: The Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000, The Human Rights Act, The Data Protection Act 1998, The Copyright, Designs & Patents Act 1988, The Computer Misuse Act 1990, and the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994. Laws relating to theft would also apply in cases of "stolen" software. (The Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994 amends the Obscene Publications Act 1956, the Protection of Children Act 1978 and the telecommunications Act 1984, to extend their provisions to transmission over a data communications network. The potential 'let out' of transmission in coded form is ruled out by the concept of a 'pseudo photograph', i.e., that is electronic data that can be rendered into an image that has the appearance of a photograph.)

Code of Conduct for the use of FirstClass

This Code of Conduct relates specifically to FirstClass but the general principles involved apply to all electronic communications systems supplied by the University and apply to staff and students alike.

The University's general rules and regulations apply to users of FirstClass (and all other electronic communication systems) just as they do in any other university environment. Specifically, the University has a published policy on harassment and has an equal opportunities policy. These policies are contained in the student and staff handbooks. These rules, policies, regulations and the disciplinary procedures associated with them apply within the FirstClass system and breaches of them, or this Code of Conduct, may result in restrictions being placed on your use of the system and ultimately your removal from the system.

FirstClass is a conferencing system for people connected with the Open University. In this environment students join with both staff and visitors to debate and discuss issues of academic and general interest. Some conferences are also copied to other external conferencing systems. All FirstClass users should recognise that comments made in such an environment reflect not only on themselves but also on The Open University as an institution. FirstClass must not be used to bring the University into disrepute.

FirstClass is a social environment. Normal rules of social interaction are in force. The remoteness of the recipients must not be used as an excuse to communicate in an anti-social manner.

Examples of such anti-social behaviour are :

- Harassment or intimidation of another user
- Person to person aggression within conferences

Deviation from the spirit of a conference

Excessive or inappropriate use of jargon, banter or graffiti

None of these are considered acceptable behaviour on FirstClass.

FirstClass users should not contribute to a conference unless their contribution is intended to further the aims of the conference.

Personal exchanges should be directed to a user's mailbox (i.e. an e-mail), not to a conference.

Personal comments about other users and their views should not be placed in public conferences.

Copying or forwarding of private messages to another person without the author's explicit permission is a breach of confidentiality.

All FirstClass preferred names must be a true representation of your student record as held on the University's central records.

The Code of Conduct applies equally for Private or Public Chat as for mail messages. Misuse of the chat facility will result in this facility being removed from your FirstClass account.

The primary responsibility for the management of any conference lies with its moderator. The moderator must ensure that the conference meets the above guidelines. (Moderators will be provided with advice on their responsibilities within their conferences.)

Complaint Procedures

A full description of the complaints procedure and advice for moderators are held inside the Conditions of Use subconference of OU Service News.

The LTS Administrators of the FirstClass system, may need to access any areas of your FirstClass account in order to investigate technical problems, in response to a complaint or through a Subject Access request. This may include a necessity to access private mail. This data may be passed to the University's Data Protection Officer(s) in response to a Subject Access request.

Ian Rosenbloom, Director, Learning and Teaching Solutions June 2002

Service Information

Backups

To ensure that the messages and information stored on FirstClass are secure in the (unlikely but possible) event of a system failure, the FirstClass servers have to be regularly backed up (i.e. all the data is copied to tape).

There will be periods when you cannot log in to the servers because of this. Backups are scheduled as far as possible to cause least inconvenience for most users. Down time for backups will be announced in the OU Service News conference - please check there for the latest information.

If planned maintenance is necessary, this will be carried out as far as possible during the general LTS network 'at risk' periods which are Tuesday 07.00 until 08.30 and Thursday from 00.00 to 08.30, so if you are unable to connect during one of these periods please try again later.

It is not possible to 'rescue' individual messages or conferences which have been inadvertently deleted or lost because of message expiry.

Message Expiry

All messages on FirstClass, whether private e-mail or conference messages, have an expiry date, after which they will be automatically deleted from the system.

Messages in your mailbox have a default life of 45 days (although you can change this for an individual message as explained in Private Mail). Any changes to the default period will be posted in the OU Service News conference.

The life of conference messages is decided by the conference controller of the conference; the conference controller can set messages to expire after a certain number of days or once the conference reaches a certain number of messages.

If you want to keep important mail or conference messages, you should save them to the hard disk of your own computer.

It is not possible to 'rescue' individual messages or conferences which have been inadvertently deleted or lost because of message expiry.

Time Limits

At the time of writing there is no restriction on how long you may stay connected to FirstClass. However, you may be logged out of the FirstClass server if you are inactive for a significant period of time. If in the future, the servers get so busy that users can't log in, there may be a limit set for how much time each user can spend connected to the server, in order to allow everyone some access.

Virus Checking

The FirstClass software provided with these instructions has been virus-checked. It is your responsibility to keep your own computer virus-free, by regularly checking it with anti-virus software. It is not possible to 'catch' a virus by reading a FirstClass message, but it is possible that files sent as file attachments may contain a virus. You should ensure that you virus-check any files (program files or formatted documents of any type) that you download, except plain text files. There is a Virus Support conference online (inside the LTS Helpdesk conference) where you can get help with the OU anti-virus software and virus problems.

Graphics in FirstClass

Some of the icons and graphics that you see when you connect to FirstClass and the forms you can use, are stored in a FirstClass 'settings file' on your computer. If there is a need to update your settings during the year (for example, if a course you are doing wants to supply some course-specific icons or forms), you will be directed to a message with a new settings file attached to it. To update your settings, double-click on the settings file attachment and select the Update option from the Updater window. From that point onwards, the new icons etc. will be part of your normal settings.

Netiquette

FirstClass is a great place to discuss elements of your course, chat about general items of interest and make new friends. However when you are interacting with other people online you don't have the extra benefits of body language or voice intonations to help you get your point across - most people will only know you by what you write and how well you write it.

To help you get to grips with the subtleties of communicating online we've assembled some basic tips that will allow you to enjoy the OU's electronic community to its fullest.

- Remember that you are talking to real people
- Try to keep your messages short
- Give your messages a descriptive Subject
- Summarise messages when replying to them
- Check with the sender before quoting from private e-mail
- Credit other people's work

- Signal your emotions in messages
- Avoid writing in ALL CAPITALS
- Send your messages to the right place