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THE UNIVERSITY OF
SOUTHERN
MISSISSIPPI®

Acceptable Use Policy

Policy Statement

The University of Southern Mississippi (USM) is committed to protecting the information technology (IT) resources and the students, faculty, staff, affiliates, contractors, vendors, and guests from illegal or damaging actions by individuals, either knowingly or unknowingly. Inappropriate information technology use exposes USM to risks including, but not limited to, malware, compromised accounts of networked systems and services, compliance, and regulatory issues. Effective information security requires the participation and support of every USM student, employee, or other who handles University data and/or information technology resources.

Reason for Policy/Purpose

This policy is required to effectively communicate the University policy regarding the acceptable use of information technology resources at USM.

Who Needs to Know This Policy

This policy applies to students, faculty, staff, affiliates, contractors, vendors, and guests at USM, including personnel affiliated with third parties or individuals accessing University IT resources.

Definitions

Antivirus Software: software specifically designed to detect and remove computer viruses and malware.

Digital Millennium Copyright Act (DMCA): United States copyright law that complies with World Intellectual Property Organization treaties, specifically addresses digital access control and digital rights management, and enhances penalties for copyright infringement over the Internet.

Downloading: network trafficking of data files originating from an external network and destined for the USM network.

Higher Education Opportunities Act of 2008 (HEOA): United States legislation that reauthorizes previous legislation designed to strengthen post-secondary institutions and provide financial aid for students at colleges and universities.

Information Technology Resources: any computing device, network, or network service used for creating, reading, sharing, modifying, or storing data and information.

Malware: malicious software that is intended to damage or disable computer systems.

Password: a combination of letters, numbers, and symbols used to authenticate an individual.

Spam: unsolicited bulk electronic messages.

Users: students, faculty, staff, affiliates, contractors, vendors, and guests.

Policy/Procedures

A. **Ownership and General Use**

1. University information technology resources (IT resources) are provided for users to enable, support, or enhance the mission and goals of the University. Use of IT resources by individuals unaffiliated with the University is prohibited, except for IT resources that are explicitly made available for use by unaffiliated individuals.

2. Users of University IT resources must exercise good judgment regarding incidental personal use and activity unrelated to the University's mission and goals.

3. USM cannot ensure individual privacy while using University managed IT resources, phone services, and Internet or network services. Data, documents, and emails created, received, or stored on University IT resources, including services hosted by a third party for use by USM, may be considered the property of USM and the State of Mississippi and might be subject to public records requests. For this reason, the privacy of personal and non-university information cannot be guaranteed if transmitted through or stored on a University IT resource or service.

B. **Responsibilities**

1. Users of University IT resources are responsible for knowing and understanding any laws, regulations, policies, or contracts that may affect or govern the resources they use or the information they access, create, or modify.

2. Users are expected to utilize IT resources with integrity and respect for other individuals, institutions, and entities.

3. Users must take necessary steps to prevent unauthorized access to University information and resources.

4. Users are responsible for the security of their account credentials, including passwords and passphrases. Users are expected to keep their credentials private and must never ask another user for their University account credentials.

C. **Acceptable Use**

1. Use of University IT resources that enables, supports, or enhances the mission of the University, fulfill the expected duties of an employee, or aid in the scholarly pursuits of a student, is generally acceptable.

2. Extracurricular activity that does not disrupt or harm the University business or expose the University and its resources to unacceptable levels of risk is generally acceptable.

3. Use of copyrighted material for which the University or user has authorization, or which use would be considered "fair use" as defined by 17 U.S.C. § 107 and § 108, is generally acceptable.

D. **Unacceptable Use**

1. The following activities including, but not limited to, are strictly prohibited:

   a. Use University IT resources to engage in any illegal activity under local, state, federal, or international law.

   b. Collection, storage, or distribution of pornography or material considered to be obscene, for purposes not related to University sanctioned academics, research, or legal proceedings.

   c. Unauthorized copying, sharing, downloading, or other use, excluding activity that is considered "fair use," of any material or intellectual property protected by copyright or trade secret. Protected material can include, but is not limited to, photographs or text from magazines, books, or other copyrighted sources, music, movies, and software.

   d. Intentionally exposing University IT resources to malicious software.

   e. Sharing access to University accounts, resources, and login information with others or allowing the use of accounts or services by others.

   f. Using University IT resources to actively engage in procuring or transmitting material in violation of sexual harassment or hostile workplace laws.

   g. Effecting security compromise, where compromises include, but not limited to, accessing data for which the user is not authorized, allowing information or resources to be available to unauthorized users, or logging into a server or account that the user is not expressly authorized to access unless these duties are within the scope of regular duties.

   h. The disruption of network resources including, but not limited to, ping floods, packet spoofing, denial of service attacks, and the forging of routing information.

   i. Port scanning or vulnerability scanning is expressly prohibited unless prior notification is given to USM Information Technology Services (iTech) or these processes are within the scope of regular duties.

   j. Executing any form of network monitoring that will intercept data not

intended for the individual unless this activity is within the scope of regular duties.

    k. Providing information about (or lists of) USM faculty, staff, or student non-directory information to parties outside the University without the express written permission of the University administration.

    l. Sending email messages, including "spam" or other advertising material, to individuals who did not specifically request such material.

    m. Any form of harassment via email, messaging service, forum, or social media, whether through language, frequency, or size of messages.

    n. The forging of email header information in an attempt by an individual to misrepresent or hide his or her identity.

    o. Creating or forwarding chain letters or other pyramid schemes of any type.

    p. Use of University resources to operate software or advertise a service or product not authorized by USM for personal gain.

    q. Downloading, accessing, procuring, or using a prohibited technology on devices or networks owned or operated by the University of Southern Mississippi is strictly prohibited pursuant to the National Security on State Devices and Networks Act as outlined in Miss. Code Ann. Sec. 25-53-191. For a detailed list of prohibited technologies, see the Mississippi Department of Information Technology Services' publicly available list accessible on the Mississippi Department of Information Technology Services website.

E. Unauthorized Distribution of Copyrighted Material

1. In compliance with the Higher Education Opportunities Act of 2008 (HEOA) [Student Assistance General Provisions 34 CFR Section 668], it is the policy of The University of Southern Mississippi (USM) to prohibit the unauthorized distribution of copyrighted material on its network while ensuring minimal disruption to educational and research activities. In support of this requirement, USM mandates the use of technology-based deterrents, educational mechanisms for informing the community about appropriate use, and procedures for addressing unauthorized activities. Disciplinary actions may include penalties such as loss of network access, as well as civil, administrative, or criminal actions. Additionally, USM conducts periodic reviews of the plan's effectiveness and, where feasible, offers legal alternatives for acquiring copyrighted material. For more information, refer to the USM Peer-to-Peer Policy.

F. Enforcement

1. **Students, faculty, and staff:** Any student, faculty, or staff found to have violated this policy may be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including suspension, expulsion, and/or termination of employment in accordance with procedures defined by USM administrative policies stated in the handbook governing that individual.

2. **External Entities:** Any external entity, contractor, consultant, or temporary worker found to have violated this policy may be held in breach of contract and, as such,

may be subject to grievances or penalties allowed by such contract.

Review

The Chief Information Officer is responsible for the review of this policy every four years (or whenever circumstances require immediate review).

Forms/Instructions

N/A

Appendices

N/A

Related Information

N/A

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Approval Signatures

Step Description	Approver	Date
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