



Dynamic Distribution Mailing List Policy

I. Policy Statement

The purpose of this policy is to provide rules on how to create, use, and moderate mailing lists using WPI's IT systems and resources.

II. Scope

This policy applies to all users of WPI dynamic distribution (dl- and adv-) lists, as defined below. All use of these mailing lists must comply with the WPI Acceptable Use Policy (AUP) as well as the guidelines in this policy; any violations of the Mailing List Policy will be treated as a violation of the Acceptable Use Policy (AUP).

This policy does not govern the usage of third-party software to manage mailing lists, nor does it govern the usage of individually-managed groups (which may often be colloquially referred to as "mailing lists").

III. Definitions

Dynamic distribution list: A dynamic distribution list is a mailing list that is automatically generated based upon data stored in WPI's IT systems (e.g. Workday). This includes mailing lists for academic units (majors, minors, grads), employee mailing lists, and advising mailing lists. Dynamic distribution lists are prefixed with *dl-*, or—in the case of advising lists—with *adv-*. Criteria for membership in the lists is determined by the list owner, and can include manually added or removed members in addition to the automatically generated list population. List membership is managed and maintained by ITS.

Individually-managed groups: An individually-created group is any list created by an individual member of the community, currently through using Outlook 365's "groups" feature. Membership in these groups is manually managed by the owner(s) of the group. Groups also provide an email address that reaches all group membership, which is prefixed with *gr-*.

Personal alias: A personal alias is an alternate email ID for an individual.

Shared mailbox: An email mailbox that multiple WPI users have access to.

Guest Recipients: A guest recipient is a member of a WPI mailing list (either dynamic or individually-created) who is not affiliated with WPI and has an email address outside wpi.edu.

IV. Policy

A. List Creation

Dynamic distribution lists are generated by ITS following a request for creation via a Service Desk ticket. Staff and faculty may request the creation of new dynamic distribution lists;



approval for this request should come from a supervisor (staff) or department head/ or their designee (faculty). Upon request, ITS staff will work with the requester to determine whether an existing dynamic distribution list already meets the purposes of the request. If not, and if the list is judged to meet the guidelines outlined in this policy, ITS will create the list.

The primary purpose of a mailing list should be to facilitate communication among multiple WPI community members. While any community member is welcome to request list creation, they are also encouraged to investigate first to find out if there is an existing mailing list that serves the same purpose. Mailing lists should not be created in lieu of a personal alias; lists with only one individual member are not permitted.

Dynamic distribution lists cannot have guest recipients. Community members who wish to create lists that reach people outside of WPI are encouraged to either create an individually-managed group, or investigate third-party list management options.

B. List Ownership

Dynamic distribution list ownership records are maintained by ITS and available for the WPI community to view upon request. List ownership is determined in conjunction with the list requester, their supervisor and/or department head/program director, and—when list membership spans multiple WPI divisions—the leaders of these divisions.

Some dynamic distribution lists are permanent (e.g. dl-students, dl-staff, dl-faculty). Records of list ownership are maintained by CITP in collaboration with ITS; requests for changes to ownership of these lists goes to CITP, who will engage with units on campus as necessary given the scope of the list.¹

Dynamic distribution lists that are associated with academic departments or programs have the department head or program director as list owner. This includes majors, minors, and graduate student mailing lists.

Dynamic distribution lists generated for advising purposes (i.e. *adv-* prefixed lists) are owned by the Office of Academic Advising.

Dynamic distribution lists for individual classes have the instructor of record as list owner.

C. List Naming

List names are set at creation time and cannot be changed. Distribution list names will automatically have the prefix *dl-*. ITS also manages academic advising lists (prefixed *adv-*) and automatically-generated course lists. Prefixes cannot be changed or removed.

¹ The dl-potpourri mailing list is an opt-in mailing list with no list owner. Individuals must email helpdesk@wpi.edu to subscribe and unsubscribe.



List names must have a minimum of four characters, not including the prefix. Names should include only the characters: a-z, 0-9, and hyphen. These restrictions are in place to support legacy IT systems where Unicode characters are not supported.

List names must be in compliance with WPI's Student Code of Conduct, Code of Business Ethics and Conduct, and Acceptable User Policy. In particular, list names must not use or contain slurs, demeaning language, or be used for harassment.

D. List Management

All mailing lists have named list owners and stated list purposes, which are recorded in the list management system. List owners have responsibility to:

- Define the list population and clearly communicate this population with ITS.
- Alert ITS to potential problems with list membership and automation if such problems are discovered. List owners may request manual additions/removals from the list.
- Determine an appropriate approach to list management for the community the list serves, in terms of both membership criteria (e.g. permitting opt-in and opt-out membership) and posting to the list (e.g. moderation queues, approved senders, or a fully open list).
- Report suspected violations of the AUP on the mailing list through the appropriate channels specified in that policy.
- Transfer ownership of the list upon a change in role or departure from WPI.
- Request the removal of the list if it is no longer needed.

ITS has the responsibility to:

- Proactively maintain the internal mechanisms that populate dynamic mailing lists based upon internal data for accuracy and reliability.
- Ensure that changes made to underlying internal data are reflected on a dynamic mailing list within 1 business day.
- Respond to requests from list owners regarding list maintenance tasks, and provide technical support for mailing list services named in this policy.
- Periodically, and on request, provide list membership information to a list owner in a user-friendly and accessible format.
- Create mailing lists upon requests that are in accord with this policy.
- Communicate with the list owner when changes to the underlying mailing list service may impact list operations.
- Communicate with the owner and when list subscription requests are made to IT that require list owner approval.

E. List Review and Deletion Guidelines

Mailing lists will be flagged by IT for review if the list:

- has not been used for more than twelve months, according to automated usage records,
- generates bounces due to invalid recipient addresses,



- has no owner (i.e. owner has left WPI without transferring ownership, and there is no clear subsequent list owner),
- violates the usage policy.

If a list is flagged for deletion, IT will reach out to the list owner to either remedy problems with the list or confirm list deletion. If there is no list owner, or if the list owner is no longer at WPI, IT will contact the original owner's supervising office to either remedy the problems with the list or confirm list deletion.

F. List Usage Guidelines

Emails sent to a list should focus on the stated purpose of the list. All communications on a WPI mailing list are subject to the WPI Acceptable Use Policy.

Recipients who are part of the WPI community (have a wpi.edu address) must use their wpi.edu address in the list and not an alternate address.

G. Specifically Prohibited Activities

The following activities are prohibited. If discovered, IT will contact the list owner to navigate alternate solutions, prior to removal of the mailing list:

- Creating or using a list as an alias for yourself
- Creating or using a list to masquerade as another person, group, list, service, or other entity.
- Creating a list to reserve the name without actively using the list.
- Creating a list to use as a forwarding technique.
- Using a list as an alias for obtaining services internal or external to WPI; users who need this functionality should contact ITS for alternate solutions such as a shared mailbox.

V. Questions

Address any questions and exception requests using a Service Desk request. Report any suspected violations of the policy to the Office of Information Security.

Responsible Department: Information Technologies Services

Policy Review/Approval: Committee on IT Policy (12/18/23); Administrative Policy Group (3/27/24); WPI Faculty (4/11/24)

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