



COMMUNICATING WITH UNIVERSITY STAFF



Communicating effectively with staff is an important part of university study and your future professional practice. This might include topic coordinators, lecturers, tutors, and professional staff from across the University. Using clear and professional communication helps staff understand how they can best support you, ensuring you receive the information you need in a timely manner.

EMAILING UNIVERSITY STAFF

Email is one of the main ways students communicate with staff at university. Unlike texting or messaging apps, email is a more professional form of communication and requires certain elements to be effective. It is also important that you email staff at the University using your university email account, which ensures your message is recognised and can be responded to securely.

When emailing, try to structure your message clearly and professionally:

1. Write a clear subject line

Your subject line should briefly explain what your email is about. This helps staff to understand your message quickly.

Examples include:

- PSYCH1101 GenAI use clarification
- MMED1010 absences
- Bachelor of Science enrolment enquiry

2. Start with a greeting

Avoid very casual openings such as “Hey” or jumping straight into a question. Examples to use are:

- Dear Dr Smith,
- Hello Helen,
- Hi Sam,

3. Use the correct name or title

Many lecturers are happy to be called by their first or given name. This reflects the relatively informal culture of Australian universities and our respectful but approachable learning environment. However, if you haven't met the staff member before, emails should begin with a formal title. For example, Dr or Professor. If they then respond with their given name, you can feel comfortable using it moving forward. When using a formal title, do make sure it is the correct one! Check to see which title is correct through your topic's FLO site or by searching the staff member's name.

4. Introduce yourself

The University is a big place, with a lot of students, so include a little context.

For example: *My name is Taylor Brown and I am in Tutorial 2 for EDUC1232*

5. Ask your question clearly

Explain what you need in a clear and polite way.

For example: *I noticed that the lecture mentions submitting Assignment 2 in Week 6, but the Canvas due date shows Week 7. Could you please confirm which date we should follow?*

6. Finish with a professional closing and signature

Complete the email with a sign-off, such as:

- Kind regards
- Thank you

And then include your name, Student ID and, where appropriate, course, year level or campus details.



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BEFORE YOU SEND AN EMAIL

Before emailing staff, check whether the answer might already be available. This can often save you time and will also ensure you avoid sending an email with a question that has already answered in other places!

Ask yourself:

- Have I checked the FLO topic site (Canvas)? Important information is often posted in announcements, general discussion forums, assignment instructions, or weekly modules.
- Have I read the assessment instructions carefully? Many emails to teaching staff relate to assignments and common questions are usually answered in the task description or marking rubric.
- Have I checked the topic outline or Handbook? These documents often include key dates, expectations, and policies.
- Do my teaching staff prefer to be contacted via FLO? You may have been directed to use the messaging function there, so ensure you follow a preference if one has been communicated.

If you still have questions after checking these sources, you can feel more confident to email for clarification, knowing you are less likely to receive the response: “check FLO”!

COMMON EMAIL MISTAKES TO AVOID

The following are some common issues that can make emails harder to respond to:

- **No subject line:** Emails without a subject line can be difficult to identify or find later. Always include a short subject that explains your message.
- **Not including enough information:** Staff may teach, or support, many students across several topics or degrees. Including your name, degree, topic, and tutorial (if relevant) helps them understand your question quickly.
- **Writing as if it is a chat message:** Emails that are very short or written like text messages can sometimes be unclear and can also sound demanding. Writing in full sentences helps make your question easier to understand.
- **Expecting an immediate response:** Staff may be teaching, researching, in meetings, or working with other students. It is reasonable to allow 2-3 working days for a reply.

EXAMPLE OF AN EFFECTIVE EMAIL

Subject: Question about Assignment 1 sources

Dear Dr Smith,

My name is Jordan Lee and I am a student in EDUC1232. I am currently working on Assignment 1 and wanted to check whether we can only use sources from the weekly readings, or if we can, and should, find additional academic sources as well?

Thank you for your time and help.

Kind regards,

Jordan Lee

Student ID: 1234567

Bachelor of Early Childhood Education (Birth to 8)

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