



## IN PERSON LEARNING AND EMAIL ETIQUETTE

*“In many ways, effective communication begins with mutual respect, communication that inspires and encourages others to do their best.” Zig Ziglar*

### Overview

Here in the Faculty of Social Sciences, UWI, Mona, we are proud to serve as role models for our students and to work with you as a team as we prepare you to become stellar graduates; the proud representatives of our brand as Social Scientists here at UWI, Mona.

While you work to acquire various academic skills and knowledge, we would like to ensure that we also assist in your holistic development by providing you with some important soft skills that are necessary to help you to achieve personal, social and professional success. This document has been prepared to guide your etiquette for in person learning as well as your email etiquette.

### In Person Learning

As we enter the second year of in-person learning, we must adapt our expectations and behaviours to get the very best from our in-person experience.

Getting the best in person learning experience means taking a more active approach, such as being prepared to actively participate in classes and tutorials, participate in discussions, and work collaboratively. Students who thrive in this environment are usually self-directed, independent learners, who accept responsibility for organizing their learning.

Below are a few easy-to-follow rules to ensure you are making the best in person impression and get the most out of your classes.

**1. Be on time and ensure you are set up correctly.**

Punctuality is especially important for classes. Ensure that you know ahead of time the location of your classroom. In fact, it would be good for you to physically visit the class beforehand if you are not familiar with its location.

**2. Try to be aware of your surroundings.**

While we understand that there are some things beyond your control, try as best as you can to ensure that your phone is off so there are no disruptions. Conversations that do not pertain to the lecture should be refrained from while those specific to the lecture are welcomed and should be shared with the lecturer.

**3. *Raise hand and wait to be called upon.***

Classroom discussions can be very exciting; however, we would like to ensure that the content of the discussion is being delivered in a helpful and respectful manner/way. If you wish to speak, please raise your hand and wait on the lecturer/tutor/instructor to call on you before you proceed.

**4. *Be Polite.***

Please take your comments seriously and think about them before you speak. When communicating, you should always treat your lecturer(s) and fellow classmates with respect. If you disagree with a view, you may express that disagreement in a civil and respectful manner.

**5. *Give your full, focused attention.***

It goes without saying that giving your focused attention is one of the best things you can do to learn efficiently and effectively. It may be tempting to use some device or engage with someone or something else in your surroundings rather than the class in which you are participating. Side conversations with other students should be avoided. Show respect to the lecturer, your peers and the learning process that you are engaged in during class. Remember too that lecturers are still required to be available for “office hours”, and that you may contact them via email for assistance with clarifying difficult material etc. Keep in mind that there are some good points that may be shared in class, and you do not want to miss these points. It is a good idea to take notes during the lectures as you will have this later to rely on.

**6. *Participate fully.***

Participating fully may look different depending on what your lecturer is expecting of you at any particular moment. At times, your lecturer will be leading the class in a discussion, and this is when it is most important to speak up and share your thoughts. Of course, if your instructor is simply sharing instructions with you, then participating fully means paying close attention to, ensuring that you understand, writing down anything you do not want to forget, and being ready to ask questions and seek clarifications about confusing sections when the lecturer is done.

Avoid the tendency of some students to sit back and observe. When a lecture is being given, it is not uncommon to default to passive spectator mode. Even if it is just taking notes, make the most of each class by becoming as active a learner as you can be.

**7. *Review your notes later.***

It may be helpful to some students to use their notes for extra review of concepts that might have been difficult. Challenging concepts may not make sense the first time through but reviewing the notes again the same or the next day might clarify all your questions.

**8. *Keep up with all readings and assignments.***

One of the challenges posed with tertiary level learning is the increased level of responsibility that students will have for their own learning. It can be tempting to put off readings and assignments. Doing this once can have a spiral effect; you are likely to fall behind if you keep putting off readings and assignments.

Avoid the panic and the feeling of constantly having to catch up by setting up routines for yourself that ensure you are always on top of your assignments and readings. A best practice that is recommended is that for every hour you spend in class, you should plan to spend two to three hours

out of class working independently on course assignments and to review readings. Give yourself breaks and set micro-goals to ensure that you keep up the motivation.

**9. Please pay special attention to your handbook**

The handbook is a binding contract with the university and MUST be adhered to for the **successful** completion of your degree. Pay special attention to Major and Minor requirements and the necessary pre-requisites. If these are not met, this will result in your degree being incomplete. Please ensure that the necessary approvals for Majors and Minors are received.

**10. Silence/Mute all Notifications from Electronic Devices During Class**

Whether or not one is using an electronic device, it absolutely should not be creating diversions in the learning environment.

**11. Harassment**

Any unwelcome conduct whether verbal, physical or visual towards any staff, student or visitor is prohibited. The faculty has no tolerance for any acts of harassment, discrimination, or violence on the basis of gender, age, race, sexuality, disability, national origin or any other characteristics protected by law.

## Email Etiquette

### **Email Addresses**

Official communication between lecturers/tutors and students and vice versa must be done using the official UWI email addresses. If you send an email from another domain, please use a professional email address which uses your name. Emails sent from addresses which do not clearly identify the sender or are not a professional type-address will not be answered.

### **Forms of address**

The easiest way to address someone is to write "Dear X".

"Hi" is very colloquial and should not be used to address your Lecturer; it is only appropriate between students.

### **Titles**

In the university context, there are three options: "Mr./Mrs. Ms.", "Dr." and "Prof". You may write "Dear Mr. Stevens". There are some individuals who may not be sensitive to titles; in this case a formal approach is still required. If you do not know whether or not the person is sensitive, it is best to be cautious and use the formal title, e.g., Dear Dr. Stevens.

### **Identifying yourself**

Simply use your first name and surname: "Samantha Laws", and provide your ID number. If you know your Lecturer well, you can use your first name. Do not assume that your Lecturer is aware of the course to which you refer. Indicate the class which you refer to as well.

### **Identifying others**

If you are referring to another student, "my fellow student" or just the first name and surname of the person in question is appropriate. Reference to "colleague" is only used in the professional setting.

### ***Before sending an email***

- Use clear and concise language. Be respectful of the reader's time and attention.
- Ensure that your writing is grammatically correct, spelling mistakes are eliminated and that the correct punctuation is used.
- Avoid slang terms such as "hiyee" or "wassup?" and texting abbreviations such as "u" instead of "you".
- Limit and possibly avoid the use of emoticons. Not everyone knows how to interpret them.
- Be cautious when using humour or sarcasm as tone since this is sometimes lost in an email or chat post and your message might be taken literally or offensively. That said, be careful of the tone of your email. This is a professional exchange. You may not wish to convey the impression of being clueless, irresponsible or rude.
- Be sure to check that you are sending the message to the intended recipient before clicking the "send button". Also, if attachments are being sent, be sure to check that they are in place before clicking the "send button". Finally, be sure to check your course resources before asking the lecturer questions, since the information may have already been shared with you on OurVLE or elsewhere.
- Similarly, think before you send the e-mail to more than one recipient. Does everyone really need to see your message?

### ***Salutation***

There are a variety of ways to end your email. Examples include: "Best wishes", "Best regards", "Yours truly", "Yours faithfully", "Yours sincerely" etc. Shortened forms such as: "Best, or Regards" have become common and are not considered impolite.

### ***Timeframe for response***

Lecturers get lots of emails; do not expect an instant response. Give two to three days for a response and if you do not hear from the Lecturer, just send the email again. The Lecturer may not have noticed it for several reasons. If you are sending an email while upset or angry, think about not sending it until you have cooled off. A 24-hour resting period is often a very good idea.

## **Student-Lecturer Interactions**

1. ***You are an adult:*** This environment is a supportive one for you to learn to accept responsibility for the ways in which you act. Students are expected to conduct themselves in a mature manner.
2. ***All classes are important:*** Lecturers put a lot of time and effort into preparing for their classes. If you miss a class, it is your responsibility to get the information you have missed. You can do so by consulting with your classmates and completing the readings. If you are unclear about something, then you can consult your lecturer. You should however be prepared before you go to your lecturer. If you do consult your lecturer, be sure to indicate what you did to prepare to meet with them; this information will be appreciated.
3. ***Your GPA is your responsibility:*** Be consistent in reviewing your performance. Discuss any challenges that may be impacting your performance early in your courses. Follow up on your assignments and ascribed grades.
4. ***Be respectful:*** The University is an environment of mutual respect.

5. **Grades are earned:** You have to put in the time to earn the grades you deserve. If you are disappointed with a grade, do not argue with your lecturer about how deserving you are of a higher grade. Rather, if you are concerned about your grade, you may take the following approach: *'I'm concerned about the grade I received. I expected it to be higher and believed I followed the requirements. May we discuss exactly what I needed to have done differently?'*
6. **Deadlines:** Your lecturer will give you adequate time to prepare for your assignments. This may be included in your course outlines, posted on OurVLE, and/or may be announced in class. It is your responsibility to follow these deadlines.
7. **Investment in your studies:** It is recommended that you review your notes before and after your lectures. At any point in time, your lecturer may choose to give you a random quiz.
8. **Be on time for your classes and tutorials:** You cannot afford to miss the content of your courses, therefore it is expected that you will be on time for your lectures and your tutorials.
9. **Missing lectures/tutorials:** The Examination regulation 13 (*Student Handbook 2023-2024*, p.42), stipulates that: "All registered students are required to attend prescribed lectures, practical classes, tutorials, or clinical instructions. Students with unsatisfactory class attendance [who have been absent from the University for a prolonged period during the teaching of a particular course year for any reason other than illness] or who have failed to submit any assessments set by his/her Examiner, are subject to debarment by the relevant Academic Board, on the recommendation of the relevant Faculty Board, from taking any University examination. Procedures to be used to measure attendance and assessments shall be prescribed by the Faculty" (p. 42). (*Excerpt from The UWI Assessment Regulations for First Degrees, Associate Degrees, Undergraduate Diplomas and Certificates Including GPA and Plagiarism Regulations*).

## Peer-Peer Interactions

Social media platforms such as WhatsApp and Instagram allow for rapid communication with friends, family and classmates, they also facilitate group participation through features that allow public access to discussion forums and posts. Below is a list of helpful suggestions that should allow seamless integration and navigation throughout group chats that are created with academic intentions.

1. Keep the group chat relevant - Academic group chats should be created for the sole purpose of discussing pertinent information relating to a specific course and quickly disseminating updates from lecturers regarding content and deadlines. If your intended subject of discussion deviates from the collective academic goal of the course or if a message only relates to a specific person, it would be best advised to have such discussions in a private forum.
2. Be cautious of the intentions of the group chats with which you are involved - Group chats that are comprised of students who have examination questions and are copying answers to course work from peers **MUST BE AVOIDED**. This type of collaboration goes against the University's policy on academic integrity. It is your responsibility to ensure that you are mindful of the group chats you are involved in. Breaching your academic integrity results in serious sanctions.

- *If you notice throughout members' interactions that there is evidence of academic dishonesty, leave the group immediately. It is best to separate yourself from the situation as soon as possible. Find the appropriate group chat of students who are looking for genuine and acceptable assistance from their peers.*
3. Be respectful of others - Do not start a group conversation at night when everyone is probably asleep. You may want to establish an appropriate time with the group. Use appropriate language for public conversation and when referring to other members of the group chat. Expletives have no place in communication with classmates.
  4. Be very mindful of your tone - The common saying: "It is not what you say, but how you say it", has even greater relevance in an online forum given our inability to interpret tone of voice in the messages that are sent. Stay clear of conversations that contain sensitive or controversial subjects, and as best as possible avoid conflict or escalating tensions through rude or impulsive responses. If a disagreement ensues, clearly state that you are happy to discuss the issue, but that a group chat is not the place. Then move to pick up the phone and have a conversation outside of the group chat setting.
  5. Allow everyone an equal opportunity to participate in discussions or decisions that are relevant to the group.
  6. Check messages for errors before pressing send - Under examination conditions, you are encouraged to check answers before turning them in; the same principle applies to group chats. Remember that you cannot take back your response once you hit send. Ensure that the message you send is the one you intended to send, before pressing send.
  7. Be mindful when utilizing the services of class representatives - Each course normally has an assigned class representative whose main role is to advocate on the behalf of their fellow classmates by facilitating communication between the lecturer and students. While most class representatives eagerly accept the opportunity to act as a liaison, they must be mindful that it is a voluntary position. They must hold themselves to a particularly high standard and be willing to make every effort to ensure that students within the course are at ease, however they must not be forced or compelled to meet individual demands. Class representatives must be spoken to with respect, and it should be remembered that they too have lives of their own.

## Dress Code

As we prepare you for the work world, we would like to introduce you to a dress code that reflects self-respect and respect for others and will help develop your professionalism. Practice wearing the appropriate attire, dress modestly.

1. Garments are designed for specific places and occasions, please dress accordingly. We therefore ask that in public areas, whether in or around campus, you wear the proper attire. Pyjamas and exercise gear should not be worn to your classes.
2. While we embrace creative expressions, be mindful of the graphics that are on our clothes. Garments with obscene words, profanities, offensive or illegal graphics should not be worn.
3. Clothing with indecent exposure should not be worn to the classrooms, examples include shirts that must be long enough to meet the pants, skirts or shorts, no midriff or torso tops, tank tops, halter tops, sports bras, or extremely short shorts that do not cover the buttocks area or

transparent dresses. Clothing that allows undergarments to be shown, such as: sagging or swagger pants, are not allowed.

Let us work together on becoming aware of and harnessing these soft skills as they can help us to succeed in the classroom and better equip us to enter and thrive in the workplace after graduation.

Sources:

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