

Communication at university

guidelines for students

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We thank you for reading
this short manual
carefully and applying the
simple rules into your
academic life.

1. Verbal Communication

- In person

Beginning of conversation:

- First greet by title and last name, then state your name, then state a comment for the meeting.
 - Ex. "Hello Prof./Dr./Mr./Ms. Doe, my name is John Smith, it is nice to meet you. I wanted to talk/ask about ..."
 - In certain situations, it is recommended to add your title and location after your name.
Ex. "Hello Prof./Dr./Mr./Ms. Doe, my name is John Smith and I'm an exchange student at the USz," ...
- **Address others with their title and last name** unless granted permission to address them otherwise. Persons without professional titles should be addressed by "Ms./Mr.". Addressing others by first name or without a title when a close relationship has NOT been established shows disrespect and leaves a bad impression.
- Speak in a friendly, calm, and low tone – do not raise your voice or talk angrily.
- Maintain a steady rhythm – do not talk too fast or sluggishly.
- Speak in an audible manner and enunciate your words - do not slur, use slangs, or mumble.

During conversation:

- Maintain a steady, calm and friendly tone and rhythm.
- Do not dominate the whole conversation (no monologues):
 - do not go on tangents or overpower the conversation,
 - answer all questions succinctly and on topic.

End of conversation:

- Thank the other party for the meeting or conversation in a steady and friendly tone.

General tips

- Maintain a professional manner:
 - do not sigh, clicking teeth, whistling, or other awkward sounds in the entirety of the conversation,
 - keep a low tone and steady rhythm when talking,
 - do not make the conversation one-sided.
- Entering an office – a quick knock and enter; no need to wait for invitation.

- **Email Etiquette**

Email structure

Although e-mails are a fast, convenient and efficient way to communicate with peers, faculty, staff, preceptors and potential employers, they should still be handled with utmost care and professionalism.

In the internal university communication you should use your USz domain email address, **after you receive it**. Otherwise your emails might not be read and/or answered by the university staff.

It is important to have appropriate structure and sound communication. All emails should contain:

- **Subject line** - should be short, concise, and to the point.
Ex. "Question about schedule", "Request for extension"
- **Greeting:**
 - The e-mail should open with a greeting such as "Dear Dr. Doe", or "Good afternoon Prof. Smith"
Make sure to address whomever your emailing with a proper preface (Ex: Dear, Good afternoon/morning) and proper title (Examples: Mr., Mrs., Dr., Prof.).
 - Never address someone in an informal manner (Ex. "hey Jane", "Good afternoon John") unless they have disclosed a preferred way to be addressed.
- **Body:**
 - Write clear, short paragraphs; be direct and to the point.
 - Make sure your tone remains professional, respectful, and as non-accusatory as possible.
 - Start by introducing yourself, by including your name, your year, and what class/matter you're inquiring about.
 - Professionals and academics see their email accounts as business, so conduct contact as such.
 - If you intend to add an attachment, make sure you state that you are doing so and include what format it is in.
- **Clear closing:**
 - Be cordial and polite.
 - Thank the individual for taking the time to reply to your e-mail.

- **Use an e-mail signature** - it should include your name, titles, and other contact information you wish to disclose.

Ex. **Jane Doe**

Erasmus exchange student at the Faculty of Humanities

e-mail: janedoe@stud.usz.edu.pl

- If you are contacting a professor from your cell phone, make sure to remove the line that says, "Sent from iPhone".

Do not expect to receive the answer to your message within the same day. All the university staff have different responsibilities and due to their number and intensity, it may take them a few days to respond. Do not re-send the same e-mail or reminders few hours/days after the initial message. Please wait patiently for the answer.

General tips

- Utilize sound, proper grammar. Use standard spelling, punctuation, and capitalization. Do not use all caps.
- Never send an e-mail when emotions are involved. Wait until the emotion passes.
- Be conscious of the "reply" and "reply-all" buttons. Know which one you've selected.
- Don't say anything you would regret. E-mails are not as private as they seem.
- Write in a positive tone making sure to avoid negative words.
- Avoid emojis – they are highly unprofessional.
- If stating a complaint, briefly state the history for the problem and explain attempts you've made to resolve the problem. Show why it is critical for the problem to be fixed and offer suggestions on ways it can be and how you can help.
- When receiving an answer, please **read carefully the whole message**. If you have problem with understanding it in English, use one of the translation options widely available in the Internet.
- If you use AI solutions to help you write messages, make sure you proofread the message before sending and delete the AI markers.

2. Nonverbal Communication

Nonverbal communication can often speak louder than verbal communication in professional settings. When communicating with faculty and staff, you want to display confidence and a level head. Picking up on the nonverbal gestures of others can help you adapt your own cues to improve communication and understanding.

Nonverbal communication:

- Gestures:
 - Keep arms open (not crossed) and close to the body.
 - Be aware of your facial expressions and hand/arm movements.
 - Avoid distracting behaviors like tapping on a table or constantly clicking a pen.

- Posture:
 - Be aware of your posture and try to avoid slouching.
 - Walk with purpose (shoulders back, head straight).
 - When standing, avoid crossing your legs.
 - Keep your body faced to the person that you are speaking with.

- Eye Contact:
 - Maintain eye contact with a positive facial expression.

3. Asking For Help

This section will discuss the general approach strategies for asking faculty or staff for assistance. It will focus on person-to-person interactions, however these strategies will be just as effective when used in conjunction with the advice provided in the previous sections.

When asking for assistance you will want the conversation to follow this general path to ensure that you maintain a high level of professionalism, build quality rapport with the person you are asking for assistance, and give you the highest likelihood to be successful in your request:

- Greet the faculty or staff warmly, by name and title.
- Introduce yourself by full name and class you attend.
- Thank them for something specific related to your request.
- In a respectful and direct way; make your request. Avoid beating around the bush, or popping a question at the end of a long explanation. Be upfront about your request and if explanation is needed, you can provide it after.
- Provide an explanation, if needed, and agree to the details of the request. The details will almost always include a timeframe.
- Thank them for their time. If they want to give you an answer at a later time, thank them for their consideration.

Examples:

1. assistance during office hours - you should not expect the faculty to teach you the material again. You should come with a few specific questions in mind, or to ask for clarification on a particular concept.

STUDENT: Hello Dr. Jones, my name is Jane Doe and I am an exchange student from your Management class. Do you have a few minutes to talk?

FACULTY: Sure, what would you like to talk about?

STUDENT: I was wondering if you could explain some of the particulars about XYZ management strategy. I'm still a bit unclear about how everything comes together.

FACULTY: I'm having office hours right now, so I would be happy to help. Do you have a particular question?

// Miley and Dr. Jones discuss the issue //

STUDENT: That's very clear now. Thank you, Dr. Jones, for your time this afternoon and for helping me to better understand what we talked about.

2. shadowing a teacher in a practice experience - when asking about participating in practice experiences you should not necessarily expect a “yes” answer. Many factors may prevent preceptor from allowing a student to participate in a particular practice experience. Don’t feel discouraged or take a “no” answer personally.

STUDENT: Hi Dr. Smith, Thank you for sharing information with the class about your project. It is very interesting to learn about different career opportunities for managers.

TEACHER: You’re welcome, I’m glad you found it valuable!

STUDENT: I would like to learn more about your project. Would it be possible for me to shadow you one day at your project lab to get a better idea?

TEACHER: Unfortunately, I rotate between the project site and the university every 6 weeks. I won’t be going back for about a month. However, if you would like to come out for a day next month I think that would be great.

STUDENT: I completely understand about the schedule. Next month works really well for me! Thanks so much for allowing me to come out. If you would like I could send you a quick email with some days we don’t have class next month to see if they work with your schedule.