

## Guidelines for Writing to Your Professor

### 1.) View an Email to a Professor as a Professional Interaction

Being a student is your job now. As in every job, the way in which you interact with others reflects your level of professionalism and therefore will lead to the way others perceive you. Your emails should contain the proper parts of a letter, convey respect and courtesy, and reflect that you are a serious student.

That means in practice:

- a) Begin your email by addressing your professor (“Dear Professor LASTNAME,”), and end your email with a closing (e.g., “sincerely”) and your signature.
- b) Be clear and concise, so that your message is well structured and easy to understand without going into unnecessary details. In best case, already a first glance at your mail should make it clear what you want to say.
- c) Make sure your spelling, capitalizations and grammar is correct.
- d) Use complete sentences and no colloquial language.

### 2.) Use Proper Email Etiquette

Besides the content of your message, some technicalities are also essential parts to consider in a professional interaction with your professor.

That means in practice:

- a) Use an email account with an appropriate address (ideally your university account).
- b) Use an informative subject line. It is helpful if your subject contains the course name and a brief explanation of the nature of the email.

### 3.) Do not Waste Your Professor`s Time and Stay Polite

Being a professor is a busy job, and teaching is not the only part of it. By avoiding sending mails with trivial requests or impolitely demanding things you show your professor respect for him/her and his/her time.

This means in practice:

- a) Do not email to ask basic questions you could answer yourself. Much information (e.g., regarding course dates; formalities of essays, papers, etc.; grading criteria) is easily available online on Canvas and other HSG platforms. However, if these information are not to be found online it is ok to ask your professor or one of his/her research assistants.

- b) Do not make demands. If you are asking for anything requiring time or energy, you should be courteous and phrase it as a request. Do not presume your request will automatically be granted.
- c) Do not email to explain why you missed class. In case something serious has occurred, especially if it might lead to you missing more classes, use the office hours and discuss it in person.
- d) Do not ask your professor for copies of their notes because you missed class. Ask your classmates.
- e) Do not write asking for extra credit.

#### **4.) Before Sending an Email, Check that You Have Written It Appropriately**

Again, your mail to your professor is a professional exchange.

This means in practice:

- a) Allow reasonable time for a response. As written above, being a professor is a busy position with various demanding responsibilities in addition to teaching your class.
- b) If you have a complaint or are unhappy about something, explain yourself calmly and politely, asking whether anything can be done about your issue.
- c) Do not share inappropriate personal details. Discuss only what relates to the class. If something serious is occurring in your life affecting your participation in class, talk to your professor in person.
- d) Always be respectful and consider carefully whether anything you have written might sound rude or offensive.