

# The Netiquette Guidelines for UWI Open Campus Staff

The appropriate way in which we communicate with each other in the online environment is now termed Network Etiquette, or 'Netiquette', in short.

The online environment is viewed as any type of communication occurring via electronic technology, such as email, web sites, discussion boards, chat rooms, Intranets, blogs, wikis, text messages and instant messaging.

The UWI Open Campus encourages students, faculty and staff to use mutual courtesy and respect in all forms of communication to promote effective and positive exchanges.

Please also make frequent reference to the University's official Email Policy, which may be found on our OC Intranet at <http://intra.open.uwi.edu/> under the title "Employee Self Help".

## Rules for Electronic Communication:

1. **Avoid offensive language.** Do not use offensive, derogatory or threatening language of any kind in an email, discussion boards, Intranet or in other forms of communication technology with deliberate intent to harass, embarrass or others in a sexual, racial, nationalistic or other prejudicial manner in violation of the University's regulations.
2. **Seek writer's permission before forwarding.** Do not forward an email message, a file attachment or a photograph without the original writer's permission. You demonstrate your integrity in personal and business communication when you first ask for permission before you forward or share another's message.
3. **Limit the use of bold fonts.** Also avoid using bright colours, especially red as this may convey an angry tone to your reader. It is advisable to use dark colors in communications as lighter colors may not print well.
4. **Avoid using all capital letters.** This implies shouting. If you want to underscore a point, underline it, use bold or use highlight feature.
5. **Use abbreviations sparsely.**
6. **Watch your tone:** As the saying goes, "It's not what you say but *how* you say it." It is a lot easier to convey the meaning of your words when you speak than when you write. Make sure your tone is polite and friendly, but gets across your intended meaning.

7. **Avoid using emoticons:** (e.g. 😊, 😞, 😡, etc). If you feel the need to use them, adjust the tone of your message, using words, instead of symbols.
8. **Reduce or eliminate the use of “Cc” and “Bcc”:** The “Cc” option should be used to include ONLY person(s) who has to perform actions relating to the content of the email OR person(s) who has no action to perform but needs to be informed of the content.  
**Bcc** should ONLY be used in the following circumstances:
  - a) for mass mailings from designated departments/specialized units - Human Resources, Marketing & Communications and CATS.
  - b) for sensitive student matters copied only to the Registry from the Principal’s Office.
9. **Use “Reply All” judiciously.** When responding to a group email, DO NOT choose the “Reply All” option if your response is intended solely for the original sender or a single individual within the group. *You do not need to share your response with everyone in the group unless the content is relevant to all members of the group.*
10. **Avoid “flaming” others.** This may be described as expressing extreme emotion or opinion in an email or online discussion board communication. This could/will lead to either:
  - a) The misinterpretation of an email followed by an impulsive email response, which will increase the probability that the recipient will also respond emotionally, making the situation even worse than it how it started.
  - b) The “circle of trouble” where emotionally-charged emails can be instantly forwarded or printed out to many people and may possibly acquire a level of importance never intended in the first place.
11. **Avoid “outing” others.** *Outing* is when someone posts very personal information (including pictures) about another staff member, student or lecturer in an online environment - without their permission.
12. **Mark email as “Confidential”.** If the contents of an email are to be kept confidential, you should clearly indicate this to the recipient.
13. **Use meaningful subject lines.** The subject line of an email message should relate directly to the subject matter of your message. It is akin to the headline of a news article. It conveys information about what the article is about.
14. **Keep your message brief and to the point.** Write the most important statements in the first paragraph then follow up with supporting details. Keep paragraphs short and easy to

read. Use blank lines in between paragraphs. Be clear and concise with your requests. Use bulleted or numbered lists to state procedures, recommendations or action points.

15. **Avoid the use of acronyms or abbreviations.** Use only if you are absolutely sure that the recipient is familiar with them.
16. **Do not use Internet jargon in your electronic communication.** Do not use instant messaging shorthand like “B4” or “2day” or “u r” when communicating online. Such types of communication reflect poorly on an education institution.
17. **Always check your spelling and grammar before you hit “send”.** Please use spell check and proof read your communication before it is sent off. Be very careful with your wording in all email, social media and online course postings as these can be read without the full context, and instantly forwarded to many people. It is virtually impossible to rescind a written communication when it becomes available for all to see (see Jamaica vacation episode of “The Office”).
18. **Add a formal signature.** You should always terminate your business correspondence with a formal signature which includes your full name, title, position and contact information. This signature can be created and stored in your email settings, so it will be automatically generated every time you send an email message.
19. **Always acknowledge receipt of an email message.** It is not only polite but necessary to let the sender know that you have received their message. If you are unable to respond in a timely manner, a simple message such as “*Acknowledged*” or “*Noted*” would be in order.
20. **Be polite when pointing out errors.** If you feel it necessary to point out someone’s mistake or inaccurate information, please do so in a polite manner. Consider sending a private email to the person rather than group email.
21. Above all, be considerate, respectful and professional at all times.

## **Rules for Communicating Student-Related Matters:**

In addition to the above rules:

1. Do not copy students on emails in which you are reprimanding staff.
2. Do not copy students on email containing internal matters.

# Email Checklist

## *Before You Hit “Send”*

Here is a checklist of things to do before you hit the “Send” button:

### **1. Are the name and email address in the "TO:" field correct?**

Many email clients automatically fill in the "TO:" field for you when you type in the first few letters of an email address or a recipient's name. Always check to make sure that the correct name has been entered. This is to ensure that your message reaches its intended destination, and not an unintended one.

### **2. Have I properly addressed the recipient?**

First names are often okay in business, but not always. If this is your first time communicating with the recipient you should use his/her title, i.e. Mr., Ms., or Dr., and last name. Look at how the recipient signs his messages before you decide whether you should be on a first name basis with him.

### **3. Check the tone**

As the saying goes, "It's not what you say but how you say it." Re-read your message to assess its tone. Make sure your tone is polite and friendly, but gets across your intended meaning.

### **4. Is my email too lengthy?**

Get your point across quickly, but make sure not to leave out important details. If the message exceeds 20 lines, consider placing the contents in a file and send it as an attachment instead.

### **5. Have I proof-read my message?**

Make sure your spelling and grammar are correct. Errors will make you look careless.

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*The information here was sourced by the following sites. For more information please visit:*

[www.library.yale.edu/training/netiquette/](http://www.library.yale.edu/training/netiquette/)

[www.albion.com/netiquette/corerules.html](http://www.albion.com/netiquette/corerules.html)

[www.otis.ipm.org/mod/resource/view.php?id=213](http://www.otis.ipm.org/mod/resource/view.php?id=213)