The Department of School of Environment, Resources and Sustainability has adopted the following Advisory for Handling All University-related E-mail

In today’s society, we are confronted by a flood of e-mails. Although it is a useful tool, it also can undermine a sustainable and productive work environment. On top of our regular responsibilities with respect to teaching, research, administration and outreach, faculty and staff receive dozens of e-mails a day -- many of them with long attachments. Please observe the following:

1. Please do not expect a response from a staff, faculty member or tutor outside of regular business day hours. In other words, even though it takes a minute to send an e-mail, your message is only one of many that we have to read so you might not get a response until the following week. SO PLAN AHEAD! Avoid last minute requests.
2. If you have not had a response within a week, it is reasonable to send a follow up e-mail to the staff or faculty member to ensure that the message was received. If you still do not receive a response, go to the office hours.
3. If you are a student and you send an e-mail to someone in the department, please first read the e-mail etiquette note below. If you want to receive a favourable response, you might want to think about what kind of message you are sending.
4. Only use your University of Waterloo e-mail address when communicating with staff and faculty. E-mails from other accounts may be viewed as spam and filtered out.
5. Make sure that you also have a subject heading. Again, e-mails without a subject are often viewed as spam.

E-mail Etiquette for Students:

Remember to use different communications approaches for different audiences:

The following approach when writing to a friend is probably quite acceptable to your audience:
hi karen, did u get your assignment back yet for ers i cant believe i only got a 59 after i spent 24/7 working on the stupid thing!!! i cant go out with u guys thursday b/c i have to study for that exam on friday especially after that assignment. if i don't pull my mark up, i'll get put on probation, and my parents will be ticked off. NEways, i'll ttyl, L8R, sharon

It does not go over very well, however, if you use the same format when addressing someone that you do not know as well:
dr wallas: i need to know why i did so badly on that last assignment. i don't get why i only got a 59. i worked really hard on that assignment, and i dont think its fare. i looked at my friends paper, and she put practicly the same thing and got a 76 why? i always get better marks then her. i cant come during your office hours and you are never around when i drop by so we need to arrange a time to discuss this. Sharon

The following approach will be more effective:

Dear Professor Wallis* <In SERS, you can address professors by their first name>
I am very concerned about my mark in your (_____ ) class. I did not do well on my last assignment and do not know where I went wrong. I would appreciate it if you could take some time to go over it with me. I would like to improve my mark in the course. Unfortunately, I have another class during your office hours. Please let me know if there is a convenient time that I could meet with you to discuss the assignment.
Thank you for your time.
Sincerely,
Sharon Simpson

*If the professor has specified that it is customary in the department to use first names, feel free to do so. If you are addressing someone in the professional world, use Mr. or Ms. (Not Mrs.) It is not customary to call professors Mr. or Ms. (or Mrs.). Usually, it is Professor or Dr.
When addressing anyone you do not know personally, it is always safer to address them by the last name even if you are feeling friendly. Some people in the working world do not take kindly to over-familiarity particularly if you are asking them for a favour (e.g. you wish to interview them).

If you are a tutor, remember that you are also a teacher. This means that you should also take care with grammar, punctuation and spelling when communicating with your students or the professor. You cannot go wrong with a formal writing style but sloppy communications can make a bad impression because it demonstrates that you cannot be bothered to write carefully. It also suggests that you do not know how to communicate effectively.

Other e-mail advice:

- Do not send anything in an e-mail to anyone that you would not want published on the front page of a newspaper.
- Avoid "reply all" unless it is really necessary that everyone sees your reply for their information or action.
- Edit replies to remove extraneous material, such copies of copies of copies of copies of previous back-and-forth e-mails unless that information is useful to the reader or one long record of the interaction is helpful.
- DO NOT USE CAPITAL LETTERS WHEN ADDRESSING SOMEONE. THAT IS CONSIDERED YELLING.
- When you send a file attachment to a professor, it is also helpful to put your last name in the file name, e.g. Simpsonchapter1. Think about how many Chapter 1 files that a professor might be sent at any one time.
- Be careful when sending out humorous jokes on distribution lists. Your sense of humour is not necessarily appreciated.
- Only use the "high priority" icon when you truly have a high priority.
- Make sure that your distribution lists are tailored to your audience.
- Be very careful about automatically copying e-mails from someone else to a general list of people. Each communication that you receive from someone else should be treated as confidential and not forwarded on unless there is a good reason to do so (preferably with the original sender's permission).
- Make sure that you carefully proofread your e-mails before you send them. Spelling and grammar influence the reader particularly when you are sending an e-mail to someone who is evaluating you with respect to assignments or a work placement.
- If you are angry or feeling impatient, send the e-mail response the next morning. Be careful about using that "reply" icon too quickly.
- Think carefully about what name you choose for your user ID. What you might find humorous, potential employers or staff may think that it reflects questionable judgment.