Improving your email communication with students

Presented by:

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Waterloo student preferences

- Email and social media are top choices
- Multi-channel approach is key
Channels and types of information

### STUDENT FEES
- Email: 92%
- Newsletters: 11%
- Social Media: 19%
- Event Invites: 6%
- Digital Screen: 5%
- Print: 5%
- Daily Bulletin: 1%
- Don't Want: 0%

### FACULTY INFO AND EVENTS
- Email: 69%
- Newsletters: 46%
- Social Media: 26%
- Event Invites: 20%
- Digital Screen: 10%
- Print: 8%
- Daily Bulletin: 2%
- Don't Want: 0%

### CAMPUS SERVICES INFO AND EVENTS
- Email: 47%
- Newsletters: 45%
- Social Media: 16%
- Event Invites: 19%
- Digital Screen: 12%
- Print: 9%
- Daily Bulletin: 6%
- Don't Want: 0%
Questions to ask yourself before sending an email

1. Am I adding value?
2. Do I have the right audience for this info?
3. Is this something they need to know?
4. Am I the right person to tell them?
5. Is email the best way to tell them?
6. Is there an action? Is it clearly stated?
7. Can I say it clearly and concisely?
8. Did I send them something else recently?
Types of emails

Mass communication
- Send same message to many students at once
- Students are not expecting it
- Less personal
- May be subject to Canada’s Anti-Spam Legislation (CASL) – see Office of General Counsel website for more info

Individual communication
- A message to a particular student, usually in response to an inquiry
- When a student reaches out to you and asks a question, they expect a response
- Tailor email to specific inquiry
- More personal
BEST PRACTICES

Mass email communications
WHAT ENCOURAGES A WATERLOO STUDENT TO READ AN EMAIL?

90% indicated that the **subject line** helped them decide whether or not to read an email

76% indicated that the **sender line** helped them decide whether or not to read an email

Students were asked to indicate any of the sender lines that would motivate them to read an email:

- **Their Faculty or Program** 83%
- **Someone they have a relationship with (TA, Professor, Advisor etc.)** 81%
- **The University of Waterloo** 72%
- **A Service or Department** 55%
Clear and Compelling Subject Line

- Specific
- Info + Action + Time Sensitive + Priority
  - Select your courses for Fall Term by Monday – High priority
- Brief (<50 characters)
- Avoid repetition
- Reason to read message
  - Learn about how to select Arts electives
Importance of sender

**STUDENT VISA:**
- Professors: 85%
- Program co-ordinators/academic advisors: 73%

**PERMANENT RESIDENT:**
- Professors: 80%
- Program co-ordinators/academic advisors: 65%

**CANADIAN CITIZEN:**
- Professors: 74%
- Program co-ordinators/academic advisors: 53%
Things to consider

- From:
  - Do not use a “Do not reply” email address
  - Set up your name to align with general accounts: i.e. advisor@uwaterloo.ca
- Greetings:
  - Gender neutrality
  - Professional language (Hello vs. Hey)
  - Include your name in your closing greeting with a personal touch
- Consider the signature line – uwaterloo.ca/brand

Jane Example, MBA
Academic Advisor
Program, Faculty
University of Waterloo
519-888-4567, ext. 77777
Class schedules now available in Quest

Your winter 2015 class schedule is available in Quest as of November 24, 2014.

You can now:

- Make changes to your schedule.
- View your appointment time for the beginning of drop/add period on Quest.
- Contact your academic advisor if you have any questions.

New! You can now also add or drop courses using Quest Mobile.

You have received an automated message from the University of Waterloo Registrar’s Office. Please do not reply to this email address as this mailbox is not monitored.
Effective call to action

- Clearly state the action – keep it simple
- Less than 5 actions per email – preferably 1 - 3
- Make the call to action stand out – bold font, white space
- Make it an obvious link – underlined blue text
- How, What, Why
Effective emails

Subject line relevant, clear, concise

Sender line relationship to audience

Formatting responsive, easy to skim, clear CTA
BEST PRACTICES

Individual email replies
EMAIL REPLIES – Consistency & grammar

- Use actual course subject codes to refer to courses (e.g., PSYCH, MSCI, KIN)
- Refer to forms by their official titles or by the name referenced elsewhere, especially if you are redirecting them to a page via a link
  - E.g., Letter of permission, Cross-registration at Laurier
- Commonly misspelled words:
  - Enrolment or enrollment?
  - Anti-requisite or antirequisite?
  - Co-ordinator or coordinator?
EMAIL REPLIES – Links

- Make sure to give context as to why there is a link
- Add links when appropriate
- Don’t:
  - Add too many links
  - Repeat links
  - Use “Click here”
EMAIL REPLIES – Length

- Use bullets where possible
- Cut out unnecessary words
- Answer each question
- Anticipate the next question
- Make action items clear and visible
EMAIL REPLIES – Anticipate the next question

- Example student inquiry: I need a class, ECON 1XX, but it is full. What do I do?

**What NOT to do:**
- Advisor: You need a course override form.
- Student: What’s an override form? Where do I get one?
- Advisor: It’s a form that the instructor needs to sign to get you into the class. It’s available on the RO website.
- Student: What’s an RO?
- Advisor: Registrar’s Office.
- Student: I’m on the site and I can’t find it.
- Advisor: The link: https://uwaterloo.ca/forms/undergraduate-studies/course-override
- Student: Where do I bring it?

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EMAIL REPLIES – Private or public?

- Watch for tone
- Select words carefully
- Never compose when angry or frustrated
- Not sure? Have someone review and provide feedback
EMAIL REPLIES – Using Quick Parts

- Setting up Quick Parts: several videos on Lynda.com
- When typing the word, the Quick Part will show up -> select Enter.
  - E.g., Starting to type the word Petition
- Use multiple “quick parts” to write your email!
EMAIL TIPS

- Consistency is key
  - Use the same terminology
- Grammar matters
  - Use Waterloo Writing Style Guide
- Add useful links
  - Teach them where the information resides
  - Don’t link to the same page multiple times
- Be clear – do they know what to do next?
- Find the balance between short/concise and long
- Write as if the email will be published on the web
- Use tools at your disposal to save time:
  - Create templates for easy copy/paste
  - Use Quick Parts in Outlook
EMAIL REPLIES – Sample exercise

You have a document with 5 sample emails. These were written by 5 different people, all of whom were given the exact same scenario.

Review as a table group and answer the following questions:

1. For each email, what was done well?
2. For each email, what could be improved?
3. If this scenario was part of a skills test – to test written communication – which candidates would you hire (rank 1 – 5)?
## Breakout # 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Advising first year students</td>
<td>Main Hall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduate roundtable</td>
<td>Multipurpose Room – stay here!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ASIS – student note sharing system</td>
<td>Meeting Room</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
THANK YOU!