



Email Response Guidelines for Faculty and Students

Preamble

These guidelines have been developed as a means of providing general guidance with regards to reasonable response times to student emails. Faculty members have the right to set their own guidelines which will supersede any guidelines set out here if they have been clearly communicated to students. Students should be aware that the guidelines outlined here are not University policy. Failure to meet these guidelines by faculty members *is not considered as a ground for an academic appeal (grade or standing)*. Students are encouraged to discuss urgent matters with their instructors by other means (i.e., during office hours, during lecture breaks or after lectures) if they feel email communication is not timely and/or effective. Students are expected to leave a reasonable amount of time for faculty members to respond to any emails and should be aware that faculty may not be able to respond via email to what student may consider “urgent” within very short periods of time.

Guidelines

- 1)** Students must be aware that email communication does not replace face-to-face communication (i.e., meetings during office hours or by appointment). Students must plan their communication with their instructors accordingly and must leave enough time for the instructor to respond (or for the instructor to book a meeting with the student). Students should thus not expect immediate responses at times around assignment due dates, and failure to leave a reasonable amount of time for an instructor to reply constitutes as a failure on the student’s obligation.
- 2)** Faculty should consider responding to a student’s email within **3 *business days***¹ of receiving the email. Faculty are not to be expected to respond to emails over weekends or on holidays. If a faculty member feels this time-to-response is not reasonable, it is advisable that the faculty member indicate what they feel is a reasonable time-to-response to student emails in their course management forms and/or by posting it as an announcement on their course shells. Students should be made aware that any deviation from these guidelines is not a reason for an appeal.
- 3)** Faculty members who may be travelling or who have other obligations that may result in a deviation to this time-to-response (or to the time-to-response communicated to the students), are encouraged to activate their automatic response system within their email accounts indicating to students that there may be a delay in responding to emails. In such an eventuality, students should

¹ A business day for the purpose of these guidelines is from 8 AM to 6 PM Mondays to Fridays and exclude weekends and holidays.

respect the fact that the time-to-response may inherently be extended at the faculty member's discretion given the circumstances.

4) In the case that a student email requires a longer time-to-response, for example, if the faculty member requires gathering information or making consultation on the inquiry (*e.g.*, with the program director or the department chair), then, the faculty member is advised to indicate this to the student by replying to the email with this information within the 3 business day window and indicate an anticipated response time, if possible.

5) Prior to emailing a faculty member, students are responsible for ensuring that the information they request has not already been presented to them elsewhere. Students should check the course management form and the course D2L shell and all associated announcements to ensure that the answer to their query is not already presented to them. In the case that the information sought *via* the email sent to faculty is already presented elsewhere and thus the email is redundant, the faculty member may choose to ignore the email. If a student does not receive a response to their email from faculty, the student is encouraged to check said sources which may contain the answer to their query.

6) Students are reminded of [Senate Policy #157](#) which clearly stipulates that only emails sent from official Toronto Metropolitan University email accounts (@torontomu.ca) will receive a response. Faculty will not reply to any emails which are sent from other personal accounts, nor are faculty members responsible for replying to such emails indicating that the student has not emailed them from a valid email address. The recommended time-to-response only applies to emails sent from an official University email account and is based on the time received. The time-to-response is not calculated retroactively in the case a student sent an email from a personal account.

7) Students should be aware that: (a) faculty members receive a very high volume of emails daily; (b) that faculty members may use various email filtering techniques to help control this high volume of email; (c) faculty members typically teach more than one course at any given time, and may be involved in other academic activities such as research and/or service; and (d) faculty members may have obligations that do not allow them to monitor email consistently throughout the workday. As such, students should always include the course code in the subject line in order to receive a response within a reasonable time frame. It is the student's responsibility to ensure that the email they are sending is flagged as being associated with a specific course in order to receive a response. Failure to do so may result in slower response times, or no response, if the faculty member cannot identify which course the student is referring to. If a student has not made it clear that their email is related to a specific course within the subject line of their email, and if they do not receive a response from their instructor, they should resend the email to their instructor with this information in the subject line. It is also highly recommended that students include the last five digits of their student number in all email communications.

8) For courses that are team taught and have more than one instructor, students should only email their own instructors and not any other instructor teaching the course nor the course coordinator (unless the course coordinator is also the student's instructor). Each faculty member is fully responsible for their own sections of a given course and this includes responsibilities regarding

communication with students. If a student emails another instructor or the course coordinator with a query, they will likely not receive a response.

9) Students are reminded that, being part of the TMU community they are bound by [Policy #61 Student Code of Non-Academic Conduct](#). Students are expected to leave enough time to receive a response from their instructors. As stipulated in these guidelines, students should expect a response within 3 business days or within a time frame as specified by the instructor. It is not acceptable for students to continually email their instructors prior to this window expiring requesting a response to their queries or reminding their instructors of their pending email. Doing so may be a violation of Policy #61.

10) In the case of any dispute with relation to these guidelines, namely, if a student does not receive any response to their emails from their instructors, the following should be followed. The student should first discuss the matter with their instructor and try to remediate any issue with them (e.g., the instructor may have not received the student's emails). If no reasonable solution can be achieved at that time after a discussion with the student's instructor, the student should seek advice and intervention from the Undergraduate Program Director. If no reasonable solution can be achieved at that time, after discussion with the Undergraduate Program Director, should the student escalate their concerns to the Department Chair.