

Policy for Email etiquette in responding to students and arrangements for contacting staff

Managing email response times

Staff will normally respond to student queries via email within 72 hours between Monday and Friday.

Where staff know in advance that they will be unavailable to respond to student emails within this timeframe, they will set up an 'out-of-office' reply to indicate their anticipated period of absence, their anticipated date of return and who else to contact in their absence. As part of the signature element of their e mail template, part time staff/associate lecturers/staff with agreed working pattern variants should indicate their normal working hours and an alternative contact when they are not available.

Students should be made aware that a response to an email query may take up to 72 hours between Monday and Friday. If after this time no reply has been received students should email again, including the original email in the new communication and also copying in their programme leader, or personal tutor.

Student/ staff meetings

The Programme Handbook should clearly articulate how the student can contact staff for a face to face meeting. In order to standardise the student experience at a programme level it is expected that a weekly appointment system is routinely operated and the process for booking a meeting with a member of staff should be clearly articulated.

- If meetings are to be arranged by email, staff should indicate their weekly availability on the module Blackboard site and the arrangement should be confirmed by email.
- If arrangements are made according to staff weekly availability posted on office doors, this should be made available at least a week in advance.
- If, in addition, an open door policy is advertised to students, then a consistent approach should be operated. This will usually mean if a staff member is in they will endeavour to answer questions / address issues that can be dealt with immediately. However, it is likely that the member of staff will agree a convenient time/date to meet. Should a member of staff not be available then a mutually convenient time to meet should be agreed by e mail.

Distance Learning Students

It is recognised that these arrangements need some slight adjustments for distance learning students although the principles remain the same.

Managing email response times for overseas students

The 72 hour Monday to Friday response time still stands for students studying at overseas partner institutions, wishing to contact Northumbria staff¹ but reference should be made to international time differences in communicating this policy.

Student/ staff meetings

Whilst face to face meetings will probably not be possible, a similar opportunity should be made available for students to set up a virtual alternative to a face to face meeting by phone or using Skype or Blackboard collaborate.

¹ A different standard may be operated by partner institutions