

# Student Communications Best Email Practices

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## Make your Subject Line Do More Work

*A Good First Impression Drives Higher Open Rates*

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### Nine Effective Approaches

*Adapted from Advisory Board's internal guidelines*

<b>Catchy</b>	Oops - you missed your registration deadline!
<b>Direct</b>	Concerned about your midterm grades
<b>Urgent</b>	URGENT: Your academic plan
<b>Authoritative</b>	Next steps to get you back on track
<b>Conversational</b>	Let's chat about chemistry
<b>Mysterious</b>	You qualify for a new program!
<b>Guiding</b>	How to improve GPA at the Tutoring Center
<b>Action oriented</b>	Schedule some time with me this week
<b>Questioning</b>	Is there a reason you haven't registered yet?

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### Write for your Audience

*Effective messages are student-centered and student-friendly*

#### Tone Should Focus on Students and Their Goals, Not Rules or Policies

##### Impersonal Copy

"Whitehouse University cares about your success and offers a number of resources for students in need of additional support. Students have found the tutoring center to be critical in improving their GPA for admission into certain selective programs"

##### Student-Centered Copy

"I care about your success and noticed that your math midterm grade is not up to standards for the Business School, which you want to apply for next semester. You should schedule an appointment with the tutoring center."

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### Language Should be Clear to All Students

*Including ESL*

#### - Reduce multisyllabic words

"Exempted" = "Do not need to"

#### - Translate jargon

"Non-credit-bearing" = "Doesn't count"

#### - Remove Passive Voice

"If you are contacted = "If your advisor by your advisor" contacts you"

#### - Ensure Readability

The Gunning Fox Index is an online tool to assess the grade-level of a given text

# Worksheet: Student Communications Audit

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## Purpose of the Tool

This worksheet will help you identify common missteps that prevent students from understanding and acting on emails from the university. It's designed as a group or independent activity to ensure student-friendly communications.

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Why?

Identify the purpose of the message. What is it meant to teach the student or get them to do?

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Who?

Identify the target for your message.

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When?

Plan the date and time for your message.

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Assess Readability

Copy and paste the message into the Gunning-Fog Index online tool: [www.gunning-fog-index.com](http://www.gunning-fog-index.com). Then fill in the following information.

- **Gunning-Fog Index Score**

Recommended score: 10 or lower

- **Number of Words**

Recommended number: <200 words

- **Number of 3+ Syllable Words**

Recommended number: <20 words

Use the rubric below to assess the effectiveness of the message's copy.

	Yes	No
Based on the Gunning-Fog Index, is the message readable for the average student?		
Does the message avoid passive voice?		
Does the message address the student as "you" and appeal to their motivation?		
Does the message include a clear, explicit next step or call to action?		

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Identify Jargon in the Message

Translate jargon into plain-speak explanations.

Jargon	Translation
e.g., Prerequisite	e.g., a course you must complete before X

### Word Bank: Common Higher Education Jargon

disbursement registrar  
subsidized eligibility  
dismissal audit  
probation misconduct  
bursar academic  
deficit standing

# Email Template Example

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## Student Seeking Admission into a Selective Program, in Need of Support

Subject: You qualify for our new program!

Dear <FirstName>,

Welcome back! We hope that you had an amazing summer and that you are rested up and ready to start the fall 2017 semester.

As you know, the nursing program has a competitive admissions process based upon grades earned. Over the last couple of years, the average cumulative GPA for students accepted to the nursing program has been **3.7 and above**. You are receiving this email because we've noticed that your cumulative GPA is currently <GPA 3.0 to 3.5>, which qualifies you to take advantage of our new program designed to give pre-nursing students an additional layer of support by meeting with a specialized advisor.

[Use this link to schedule a program appointment](#) or respond to this email to attend one of the office hours listed below.



## Student Struggling to Meet GPA Requirements for His/Her Major

Subject: URGENT - Chemistry Plans

Hi <FirstName>,

Welcome back! We hope that you had an amazing summer and that you are rested up and ready to start the fall 2017 semester.

I am writing to follow up about an email I sent a week ago. Most science-related industries generally look for students with a 2.8 GPA or higher. I noticed that you currently have a <Cumulative GPA >2.5>. I would like to meet with you in person to discuss your goals and create action steps together. **Please use the link below on or before Wednesday, October 22, to schedule an appointment during the week of October 27.**

If you have decided to switch majors, please respond to this email and let me know so that I can work with you to ensure that the department does not put an advising hold on your account.

Have a great day!



## Student Who Missed Registration Deadline

Subject: Is there a reason you have not yet registered for classes?

Name,

Your registration window closes **April 1 (tomorrow)** at 11:00 am. To have the best opportunity to get to the classes you want, you need to register before the window closes.

If you are not able to complete your scheduling by 11:00 am tomorrow, you will have to wait until Schedule Cleanup (April 27-May 8), and you are less likely to get the schedule you want.

If you need assistance, please let me know.



## Student Who Made a Successful Major Change

Subject: Excited for your new Journey!

Hi <FirstName>,

I noticed that you successfully changed your major from Mechanical Engineering to Environmental Studies. Congratulations!

As we discussed, I think this major is a great fit for you based on your interest in alternative energy and sustainability issues, and your strong performance in your science classes to date.

Are you familiar with the career services office? I recommend you visit them to learn more about opportunities in the field of sustainability. If you are interested, **let me know before the end of May and I can put you in touch with one of my colleagues who is a career counselor there.**