# E-mail protocol for Media, Arts and Humanities

# 1 rule and 11 suggestions to reverse e-mail overload

**Rule**

We expect all communication in the School, including email, to observe normal professional standards of politeness and respect. We recognise that many staff and students in the School work flexibly, but to limit the volume of e-mail we need to set boundaries around the times when email exchange occurs. **Please respect everyone’s personal time and send work-related emails in normal working hours (Monday to Friday, 8am - 6pm).**We willaim to **reply to emails within a week.** Everyone has competing commitments, so an immediate response is often not possible. For when it is needed, please see suggestions 2 and 4 below.

**Suggestions for how we might limit e-mail further**

**1. Consider recipients’ time:** as the message sender, how can we minimize the time our e-mail will take to process? Try to keep it short and clear with regard to its purpose.

**2. Can we use subject lines better?** start with a subject line that clearly labels the topic, then try including a status category: [Info], [Action], [Urgent]

**3. Can content be shorter and clearer?** If the e-mail has to be longer than [five sentences](http://five.sentenc.es), it is best to state the basic reason for writing in the first sentence and to use short paragraphs.

**4. Maybe short or slow responses are not rude.** Not all e-mails need an immediate response. If yours requires an answer within 24 hours, mark your message as urgent.

**5. Consider whether a response is needed at all.** Many e-mails don’t require an answer. Acknowledgments or ‘thank you’ e-mails are nice, but they do add to the overall volume of e-mail. Send them only if you wish, or use the ‘like’ facility in Outlook, or NNTR (see below).

**6. Give these Gifts: EOM NNTR**
If your email message can be expressed in half a dozen words (‘moderation of X completed’) you can just put it in the subject line, followed by EOM (= End of Message). This saves the recipient having to open the message. You can also end your e-mail with NNTR, for “No need to respond”.

**7. Are open-ended questions necessary?** “Any thoughts?” or “How can I help?” may not be that helpful in limiting the volume and length of e-mail. Easy-to-answer questions, with concrete options, such as: “can you send me three suggestions?” or “can I help best by a) calling b) drafting a proposal or c) referring this to x?” may be more effective and save everybody time.

**8. Who really needs to be copied in?** For every recipient added, total response- or processing time is multiplied. There is often no need to use default ‘Reply All’. Maybe you only need to cc a couple of people on the original thread, or none.

**9. Consider cutting the thread: s**ome emails depend for their meaning on context, which means including the thread. But does it need to be the whole thread? Consider cutting what is no longer relevant, or making a phone call instead.

**10. Is an attachment really necessary? Content is more likely to be read in the body of your e-mail so it may be better to incorporate the text of your short document into your message rather than to send it as an attachment.**

**11. Let’s disconnect!**
If we all agree to spend less time doing e-mail, we would all get less e-mail. Consider blocking out half-days at work when you don’t go online or making a commitment to email-free weekends. Or add an auto-response in your off-time that explains your e-mail policy. For example:

*In the School of Media, Arts and Humanities we value flexible working and respect varying working patterns. I check my e-mail twice a day between the hours of 8 am and 6 pm, Monday to Friday. Please be assured that I will respond to your message in a convenient and timely manner.*

**DRAFT e-mail protocol for MAH students:**



E-mail is the main form of communication outside class time between you and your tutors, and you and Professional Services staff in the School and University. Please remember to **check your emails daily**.

**Here are some helpful tips about sending e-mails to staff in the School:**

* **When can I send an e-mail?** Staff will respond to your e-mails between 8 and 6, Monday to Friday. Please respect these times and remember that, if you need to contact your tutor, you can also use their online or face-to-face office-hours, or the School office may be able to help.
* **How should I address members of staff** in an e-mail? It is polite to address your tutor or the member of professional services staff by name: ‘Dear…’ If you know the person already, just the first name is fine. If you don’t know them, use their full name and title (‘Dear Ms….’; ‘Dear Dr. …’).
* **How should I end the message?** Always sign your message with your full name. It is also helpful if you include your course, module and seminar group, because staff see dozens of students during their day.
* **In what style should I write an e-mail to a member of staff**? You do not have to be too formal, but be polite and clear in your message. Asterisks around a word are an \*easy\* way to add emphasis, if needed.
* **And finally:** please don't send an-email in a hurry when you're in a panic or angry. Once you send an e-mail message, you cannot retract it, so take time to calm down and consider what you are writing and why.