

Ways of communicating with students

As a tutor, you may only be on campus for a short time each week. Even so, students still appreciate a tutor who is available to discuss course issues with them. Depending on your schedule, you may decide to have drop-ins, booked appointments, respond to questions by email, host Zoom sessions or use a Frequently Asked Questions discussion board in Canvas to respond to student questions. Discuss your options with the course coordinator and let students know how to get in contact with you. If there are any changes, inform students as soon as possible to avoid problems.

Office hours

If you have an office (even if it is shared with other tutors), consider using that as a dedicated appointment space while you are on campus. If you are teaching on more than one course, you should allocate different office hours for each course. This will enable you to focus on one course at a time. This is particularly important when the subject matter is complicated, or assessment time is approaching.

Email versus discussion boards

When considering electronic communication with students, consider the strengths and weaknesses of individual emails compared to more open Canvas discussion board.

Email	✓	It's more personal and private – students get a response from you without having to put their hand up in class
	✓	It's timely – you can give your students an expected response time, usually within 48 hours.
	✗	Students may avoid sending you an email because they do not wish to appear foolish or uninformed.
Discussion board (Canvas)	✓	It's more general – lots of students will 'stalk' the board without asking questions themselves. They can get answers without actually asking any questions.
	✓	Students should still be told the expected response time for your responses. In the meantime, other students can contribute their answers which transforms the discussion board into a place for selfdirected learning.
	✓	Allowing students to post questions anonymously can be very useful. Noone needs to know who asked which question but everyone can benefit.

You should always talk to the course coordinator before you decide how you will communicate with your students. Remember, tricky questions should always be referred to the coordinator or the relevant lecturer to avoid confusion.