Online Etiquette: Good online behaviour at the University of Law

To get the most out of online learning, you must be engaging with the discussion and activities in the teaching area and any social spaces where you meet other students. These spaces should be inclusive and make you feel safe, respected and build your sense of belonging with the learning communities.

Online Etiquette refers to good online behaviour rules when using digital devices such as desktop, laptops, mobile telephony, or tablets. Below we outline how we build and maintain this vibrant and respectful online community space.

Student Guidance

The principles of interacting in an online learning environment are the same as those used in face-to-face conversations. There are numerous ways of communicating in the online space; this may be through email, private messaging, and discussion forums. We must select the proper communication channel to seek further support during the learning journey. There are opportunities to present your ideas, debate on the subject matter, or present some of the discussions you had in breakout areas. Good online etiquette is where you construct and deliver a respectful message about the subject matter in the discussion areas. You will be invited to share experiences if you feel safe to do so. All discussions have the underlying principle of conveying information to build on the online community's knowledge.

Useful Tips

1. When joining an online session, insert your <u>full name.</u> Your full name is essential so that the tutor can record your attendance. It is very tempting to use an alternative name for your login; please use your full name so that your attendance is acknowledged and that any comments in the collaborative discussion are attributed to you. To safeguard students in the online environment, those who use alternative or incomplete names will be asked to sign in again.
2. Check your volume setting is at the right level.
3. Reduce any unnecessary noise, e.g. Closed doors and windows, and Fan turned off, Mobile phones and beepers muted, Microphone not obstructed
4. Think before speaking at the start and close of a session as audio may be connected even though there is no video.
5. Mute your microphone when not talking
6. Don't talk over others. Take turns to speak.
7. Don't shout. Speak in your normal voice.
8. Address the room when you speak to allow the microphone to pick you up
9. Don't create unnecessary noise by tapping fingers, rustling paper, jangling jewellery, playing background music.
10. If you ask a question, pause briefly to allow others to un-mute their microphones and think of a reply.
11. Adjust the lighting. - Avoid placing the camera to face windows or, close curtains/blinds, put lights on to compensate for closed curtains/blinds. If the room allows, have the wall behind you darker than your face

12. Keep camera adjustments to a minimum.

Now that you are ready to begin your online interaction ensure you apply the good online behaviour below in all your activities.

Good online behaviour

Announcing your online presence - Arrive on time to the session prepared – online learners find it helpful to arrive 5 minutes before the scheduled start to check their microphone and camera, should they wish to use them. When coming online, give a friendly gesture, this could be a wave as you appear on screen or a 'Hello' in the chat feature. Assume others can see and hear you even if you cannot see or listen to them.

If you choose to speak online using your microphone, introduce yourself when talking or asking a question for the first time. If others know who they are speaking with, they are more likely to participate in the discussion.

If the tutor has indicated the use of 'hands up' feature in the online space, press the hands up button to show you have a point to make. Wait until you have been invited to speak.

Give it all your attention - In is very tempting to multi-task whole others are speaking or debating items in the discussion forum. Ensure you give the debate your fullest attention to avoid misunderstanding the points. Multi-tasking in live meetings/debates can often distract others and convey your lack of interest in what people say.

Thanking, Acknowledging and Supporting - It is often difficult to see people nodding or smiling in an online environment when you read a message or listen to their presentation. It is essential to think about how you express your gratitude and respect for the contribution made.

If you choose to offer your thoughts in a written or oral format, ensure you start by thanking the person for their opinions. Acknowledging the person's contribution is a respectful way to show you appreciate their perspective. If you do not recognise the contribution, the other person may feel ignored and discouraged from contributing anything in the future.

Acknowledging before differing – sometimes you may have a different opinion from someone else in the online space, this is perfectly acceptable. But before you differ, think about your response, and start the discussion with summarising the other person's point to show you have understood their perspective/idea or comment. The other person will appreciate you are trying to understand them.

Making your perspective clear – think and structure perspective clearing before sharing it with others. Start the conversation by owning the comment you are about to make; this can be through 'I think..', 'My view..', or cite a quote and acknowledge the source of the message. Keep the contribution short to allow others to comment and share their views.

Check emotions – It is often difficult to convey how you are feeling in the different communication channels. Feelings can be easily misunderstood when you cannot see faces or body language. You rely upon your interpretation of what is said through a microphone or posted in a discussion area. Always think about how the receiver would feel when they read or hear your message. If you have incorrectly expressed your emotion, the other person may feel upset. Avoid 'flaming' or typing words in CAPITALS (in other words, shouting) when posting online to avoid offending and upsetting others. Remember the written word can be misunderstood because of lacking information, i.e. context and intention.

Before posting – check your messages for any negative emotions, take a break and re-write a respectful post with smileys or emojis to express your feelings.

Respecting difference – always respect others and their cultural, religious, professional, academic and economic backgrounds, skills, abilities and contributions.

Asking permission – If you find that others have made invaluable comments you wish to cite, always ask their explicit consent before doing so.

Respect the space – Online spaces are designed to encourage respectful collaboration. If your tutor invites you to interact with an online whiteboard, consider what you write or draw in that space. Before posting, check you are posting your message in the right place and that it is respectful to you and to others.

Personal Information – Do not give out any personal information that you would not give to others. If you use a web camera, ensure no personal information is within view of the camera, such as banking details. It is recommended that you select a background setting so others cannot see the room you are working in and to protect your privacy.

Social forums – There is growing use of online social spaces where students can network and support one another in their studies. Social spaces do not have members of teaching staff moderating the interaction. All student behaviour must follow the Online Etiquette and Student Charter.

Important note
Your behaviour should continue to comply with the Student Charter. Serious or persistent breaches of the Online Etiquette may lead to your removal from the online space, and further action against unacceptable behaviour.
If you are concerned about the conduct of anyone in an online space please contact your Personal Tutor or the Welfare Service at your campus.

Version History

Version	Authored/Amended by	Date
V1.1	Director of Academic Enhancement	30.3.2020
V1.2	Director of Academic Enhancement and Director of Student Experience, Wellbeing and Inclusion	02.02.2021