

How to Communicate with your Academic Advisors via Telephone, Email, and S.A.N.

1. First and most importantly: we like to see and visit with you in person. Email is a format that does not lend itself to personal interaction of a connective kind. We would always prefer that you stop by to see us or call us on the telephone if you have urgent questions, immediate needs, or just a quick question. If you call on the telephone, we can answer general questions and begin to address personal issues. However, we cannot answer specific academic questions that require accessing your records and or enter into detailed discussions regarding personal problems; we prefer, and are required by Federal law, to do this in person.

2. If you Email us with a question, a request, and/or have an issue to discuss...

- ...you might expect an 8 hour to 48 hour response time (most times it is much less), especially during high traffic times such as during mandatory academic advising and registration. If you need an immediate answer to the question or problem stated in your Email, it is best to call us or stop by the office and see us.

- ...and because Email addresses these days are so wonderfully unique and do not immediately identify the user, please include your full name and UT EID when Emailing. It is incredibly difficult to assist you when we have no idea who you are. Consider adding an automatic "signature" to your Email preferences to simplify the process. And while on the topic of names...

- ...remember, your academic advisors have names and we encourage you to use them. While we do **not** wish to observe formal etiquette (and prefer **not** to be addressed as "Mr." or "Ms."), it would be nice to be greeted with our names as opposed to, "yo", "dude", "hey lady", or worse, no greeting at all with just a launch in to what you want from us. The ease of Email communication is **not** an excuse for presumed casualness.

3. There are certain kinds of information that advisors cannot share with you via Email. Any question that requires us to access your academic or scholastic record or prompts us to discuss extremely personal subjects cannot, by mandate of federal law, be discussed via Email or over the phone. Instead, questions, requests, and sensitive issues will be addressed in the form of SAN: Secure Academic Notes.

- What is SAN? If you have recently sent an Email to an advisor, check your Email again! The undergraduate advising office is now using the SAN system. SAN (Secure Academic Notes) is a secure environment in which university advisors and administrators can correspond with students concerning FERPA-sensitive issues. FERPA (Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act) is a federal law that states schools may disclose, without consent, "directory" information such as a student's name, address, and telephone number - unless the student has elected to have that information restricted. However, this law **does** prevent us from releasing personally identifiable information contained in a student's records without the written consent of the student (except in a few noted exceptions). We have an obligation to maintain the confidentiality of such student documentation. This information includes official University academic and personal records relating to scholastic, disciplinary, and fiscal matters as well as records maintained by University offices and agencies providing services sought voluntarily by individual students. Because ordinary Email does not guarantee the identity of the recipient of a communication, we cannot include FERPA-protected information in an Email. Encrypted Email accounts which are protected by secure login do offer adequate protection, and this is what SAN is used for. So, what can we discuss via Email versus SAN?

Here are some examples of what is **acceptable** to discuss in Email format:

- general questions/issues that are NOT personal or specific to you in nature
- when do certain deadlines occur
- where does one go to: drop courses, join student groups, seek career advice
- who to call to complain about a university policy
- how can I get a job on campus
- where might I find or locate...

Here are some examples of what **cannot** be discussed in Email format but might be communicated via SAN:

- any time your academic or scholastic record must be accessed to assist you
- issues involving The University's Office of the Dean of Students
- personal issues (family, financial, health/medical, legal)
- enrollment issues
- academic difficulty issues
- questions about degree requirements you lack
- request to know GPAs, etc.
- SPECIAL NOTE: even though the issues listed above can be discussed via SAN (Secure Academic Notes) this does not mean that we prefer SAN communication to seeing you in person or speaking to you on the telephone. If you are facing ANY of the issues listed above, please do not wait for the time delay that can occur with Email and SAN turn around time: please come visit us in person or call the office at 475-7718.

Please read the *University Electronic Mail Student Notification Policy (Use of E-mail for Official Correspondence to Students)* at this link for additional information: <http://www.utexas.edu/its/policies/emailnotify.html>.