

CMNS SAB
Communicating concerns to Faculty

- Set out a clear articulation of the problem you are encountering. Set this out in writing and think about your articulation before you communicate your concerns.
- Communicate your concerns to the instructor in a polite and constructive way, and in a private one-one-one conversation, either in person or over email.
- Express these concerns in positive and mature ways. Be professional in all communications.
- Avoid pointing the problem to the course. Express your own learning styles and perceptions.
- For example, rather than expressing that “the assignments are too hard”, find a way to express “I learn best if the assignments are explained more in detail”, or “ I would be able to organize my work if the assignments were broken up into smaller pieces.”
- Be specific and concrete about your concerns.
- For example, instead of simply asking for a re-grade on an assignment, look carefully at any posted key and write an articulate statement on why your answer should receive more credit.
- Be careful about expecting or asking for a curve on an assignment or grades. Students often see a curve as helping all students to be assigned a higher grade. A true curve gives as many low grades as high.
- Understand that “working hard” is not the only requirement for a particular grade. Students must show evidence that their hard work has led to mastery of the material. It is not up to the instructor to be sure a student gets the grade they want, its up to the student.
- Self reflect on the value of the work in the course and the instructor’s expectations before reflexively raising a concern.
- Think about what the point of the various assignments and assessments might be. Articulate questions about the meaning and point of the assignments and assessment. Consider asking the instructor how the assignment or assessment fits in with the overall course learning goals.
- Think about the long-term value of the course or the assignments, and how it fits into your broader work at the University. A hard or challenging course might be to your greatest benefit, in the long run.
- Consider talking with your academic advisor about your concerns. Your advisor might help you to articulate and clarify your concerns, and to make a plan for how to express them.
- If you do not feel comfortable talking to the professor ask yourself why. If the reason is something that you can overcome – such as you are a bit afraid of talking to him or her- then try to overcome that and follow through with a communication.

- If you do not want a personal communication with the instructor consider finding an anonymous way to communicate. An old fashion letter in a mailbox might initiate dialogue.
- If you feel the situation is egregious and beyond your ability to address, you may request a meeting with either the Undergraduate Director or the Department Chair for the department in which the course is taught.