



L'Excellence du
service
Excellence

Service Excellence Guidelines

Excellence

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President and Vice-Chancellor's message



The University of Ottawa has a long history of excellence. We have always sought to provide the best learning environment for our students, the best teaching environment for our professors and the best working environment for our personnel.

We are now creating service excellence standards to help ensure that the University continues to exceed service expectations. Our service excellence standards will reinforce the best practices already put in place by staff and facilitate collaboration and the sharing of knowledge and expertise among employees.

Students are central to everything the University does and aspires to do. We strive to create a stimulating and supportive environment for them. Providing service of the highest quality is essential to helping students succeed both academically and personally, so that they may reach their full potential. Our united efforts towards excellence will create a stronger University community where students, faculty and staff can succeed and feel proud to belong.

You play a vital role in the success of our university. Thank you for your engagement and support.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Allan Rock". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Allan Rock
President and Vice-Chancellor

Service Excellence vision

Our redefined guidelines are a reflection of the University of Ottawa's vision of service excellence. By choosing to make the five pillars below part of our daily commitment to service excellence, we're creating a better university experience for everyone and helping prepare the leaders, innovators and global citizens of tomorrow.



I find solutions

- I am proactive and take responsibility for doing what is right for you.
- I am flexible and make it happen, whether I can personally address your needs or refer you to someone who can.



I reflect a positive attitude

- I smile and engage with you and seek to understand your needs and expectations.
- I am pleased to provide you with a courteous, timely and efficient service.



I demonstrate competence and professionalism

- I take great pride in the language, actions, knowledge and image I use to convey my professionalism.



I treat the members of our community with respect

- I value diversity, recognizing that everybody is unique and equally important.
- I ensure that everyone has access to resources and facilitate inclusion.
- I respect your choice of official language.



I exercise care and devote my full attention

- I establish a rapport with you by showing genuine interest in you and your concerns.
- I always go the extra mile and treat you with respect.

I am Service Excellence

To ensure that we consistently provide excellent service, we are always striving to redefine our service excellence standards. This document includes service excellence guidelines that will help with in-person, phone and email interaction with past, present and future members of the University of Ottawa community.





Bilingualism

As employees of the world's largest English-French bilingual university, you've probably experienced first-hand the difficulties in maintaining a bilingual environment. Keeping the University of Ottawa fully bilingual is hard work, but it shapes us as a University community, challenging us to strive for excellence every day.

Bilingualism at the University of Ottawa is a direct reflection of bilingualism in Canada as a whole. Historically, Canada has always been committed to the diversity and complexity of multiple cultures. French and English have always existed side-by-side. By offering programs and services in both languages, the University encourages students and staff to embrace the linguistic and cultural diversity of our country.

There are a number of different ways you can ensure that the University upholds our bilingual mandate:

- Always respond to people in the language in which they initiate conversation.
- If you initiate conversation, be sure to speak in both languages. For example, greet people with "Bonjour. How may I help you?"
- If you must speak to a colleague about a person's request and the person is within hearing distance, use the official language he or she has chosen. This also applies to correspondence that the person may have access to. For example, if you're emailing a colleague and know that the email will be forwarded to the person, use the official language chosen by the individual.

Above all, ensure that the quality of service and the attitude with which you perform your job doesn't change no matter which language the individual chooses. Always strive to provide the best possible service in both official languages.



Putting yourself in the student's shoes

As an employee of the University of Ottawa, your job is centred around students, whether or not you work on the front line. And because your workplace is so student-focused, it's extremely important that you put yourself in the student's shoes. Here are some examples:

You've had a bad morning and are now responsible for answering the phone for InfoAdmission. You're a representative of the University of Ottawa, in some cases the only representative the prospective student knows. Remember that the person is facing a very difficult decision, and that most prospective students are unsure about what their best option is. Lay out as clearly as possible why you feel University of Ottawa would be a good fit.

You've had a bad morning and now have to attend a meeting concerning communications. Remember that, though you don't have to deal directly with students, many of your colleagues do and that being friendly and understanding will make everyone's job easier.

You're dealing with a student who has just been told that he or she is not eligible for the financial aid the student was counting on. Realize that this is a moment of extreme stress for the student, who is likely wondering how to afford tuition and textbooks, on top of other necessities such as rent and food. Go through all of the student's other options. If you feel it's appropriate, you can also go through some of the other services the University of Ottawa offers to help students in financial need, such as the food bank, the Work-Study Program, etc.

You're helping a first-year student with course selection, and the student doesn't seem to understand why he or she needs to take a particular philosophy course for a Major in French Studies. Remember that this is a very emotional time for students, and students may not know what courses they should or need to take to succeed in their programs.

Understanding the student's perspective is not only critical to providing the best possible service. Staff who have put themselves in the student's shoes have also been responsible for many initiatives to help the students in their academic and everyday lives. By understanding the mind of the student, you can create an environment that encourages growth, learning and success.



Resolving student inquiries at the first point of contact

By improving our ability to resolve students' inquiries or problems in a single contact, the University of Ottawa will make great strides in achieving service excellence and becoming a recognized leader in the area. Many students feel that they get the "run-around" when searching for information. They are often sent from office to office without their problem being solved. Changing this will have a significant impact on the student experience and students' overall satisfaction with the University.

First contact resolution is one of the most important client experience metrics used today by best-in-class organizations. Directing students to the right contact person on the first referral or resolving their inquiries or problems immediately helps us exceed their expectations and reduce duplicate efforts for employees.

Our goal is to provide students with the right answer the first time they contact us, whether online, by phone or in person. If you're uncertain about the best approach to resolve a problem, follow up with the student as necessary. When in doubt about the proper contact person or referral, call ahead to check before sending someone on to another department. We are committed to "refer with certainty" to achieve a higher first contact resolution rate.



Online communication

Online communication plays an important role in how we serve our University community. These guidelines will ensure that we are good University ambassadors during every interaction. We recognize there will be peak-demand periods throughout the year when service excellence is more difficult to maintain. These guidelines will help us provide our highest quality of service year-round.

Initial response

- Acknowledge receipt of the correspondence promptly. Set your email program up to generate an automatic bilingual acknowledgement and indicate when you will be able to respond, preferably within one business day. Provide a phone number and contact name in case the matter is urgent.
- Always respond in the official language chosen by the correspondent.
- If you will be away from your desk for a day or more, set up your email program to generate a bilingual away message that provides an alternate contact name and email address. Check that your replacement will be in the office when you're absent.
- Always use the formal "vous" when responding in French.
- Be sure to manage expectations by acknowledging receipt of the email personally within **24 hours**. If you're unable to answer the correspondent immediately, provide the correspondent with a timeframe for when you will have the answers.

Bonjour,

Votre message m'est bien parvenu. Toutefois, je ne pourrai y donner suite qu'à mon retour le [date de retour]. Pour toute question urgente, veuillez communiquer avec [nom] à [xxx@uottawa.ca] ou au 613-562-5800 poste [xxxx].

Thank you for your message. I will be out of the office until [return date] and will respond to you at that time. If this is an urgent matter, please contact [name] at [xxx@uOttawa.ca] or 613-562-5800 extension [xxxx].

Your name

Votre poste | Your title

Establish rapport

- Be sure to address the person by his or her full name (only use Ms. or Mr. if you're certain of their sex).
- Keep the tone of your response pleasant, enthusiastic and professional. Take the time to respond in full sentences. Incomplete sentences may be seen as brusque or impatient.
- Use professional, straightforward language, avoiding University administrative jargon.
- Use proper grammar and spelling.

Ensure confidentiality (when necessary)

- When students use uOttawa email, this confirms their identity.
- If students don't write from a uOttawa email account when confidential information is required, tell them you will respond to their uOttawa account.
- When you tell them so, explain that it's necessary for you to confirm peoples' identity to ensure the confidentiality of their data.
- If applicable, for transactional purposes, ask for a student or employee number.
- If the student doesn't have his or her number, ask for the student's name and date of birth to verify through the University system.

Confirm your understanding

- When you're uncertain about what the person's exact needs are, repeat the question or concern back to the individual in your own words (e.g. "If I understand correctly, you're asking if...").

Quick tips

- Be courteous in the way you start your emails.
- Use a clear and concise subject line.
- Keep the email concise.
- Cc only those who really need to know what you're talking about and avoid using Bcc.
- Proofread for grammar, punctuation and spelling.
- Make your email action-oriented.
- Beware of the "reply all" button.
- Set up in-person or over-the-phone meetings when necessary.

Be the solution

- Respond to the question clearly.
- If the issue is complex, schedule an appointment to speak in person or by phone in order to avoid prolonged back-and-forth correspondence.
- If you're not sure of the correct answer, tell the person that you will contact him or her once you have the necessary information, and make sure to follow up.
- If the person must be referred to another individual or department, be sure to carbon copy (cc) the person referred to in email.
- If you transfer the person, invite him or her to contact you again if the matter isn't resolved.

Close the email

- Ensure you've answered all questions and concerns by asking if the client has any other questions.
- Thank the person for the email and wish him or her a good day.

Signature line

End all of your emails with a signature line using the following format:

Full name French job title English job title French Department/Faculty/Unit English Department/Faculty/Unit Department/Faculty URL in both languages, if applicable Email address Telephone number including area code with extension in parentheses Fax number including area code Postal address



In-person interaction

Every interaction and service encounter is important to the University. Greeting and responding to people while showing genuine interest in their inquiry or problem shows others that service excellence is a top priority for the University of Ottawa. Here are some standards for in-person interactions.

Initial greeting

- Offer assistance promptly and pleasantly. Smile and establish eye contact. Project a friendly, enthusiastic and professional attitude.
- When you don't know the person requesting help, greet the individual in both official languages. Say: "Bonjour. How may I help you?"
- After that, communicate with the individual in the official language in which they speak to you.
- In French, use the formal "vous" to show respect, unless the individual invites you to use the familiar "tu".

Establish rapport

- Focus your attention on the conversation and avoid letting yourself be distracted by the phone or conversations around you.
- Speak to the person as you would like to be spoken to yourself. Keep your voice cheerful and use a positive tone.
- Show that you are able to listen and respond (e.g. "Tell me more about your situation...").
- If you must speak to a colleague about the person's request and the person is within hearing distance, use the official language chosen by that person.

Ensure confidentiality (when necessary)

- Find out the person's name and use it often during the conversation.
- If you're uncertain of the pronunciation, ask for clarification.
- When helping students, ask for their student card and confirm their mailing address.
- If their student card is not available, ask for their student number, as well as their name and date of birth, to verify through the University system. Explain that this verification is required for security purposes.

Confirm your understanding

- Listen carefully to the question or concern without interrupting.
- Repeat the question or concern back to the person in your own words, to be sure you understand it (e.g. "If I understand correctly, you're asking if...").

Be the solution

- Respond to the question clearly and ensure the person understands the answer.
- If you're not sure of the correct answer, arrange to get back to the person with the necessary information, and make sure you follow up.
- Ensure you refer the person to the right individual or department. When in doubt, call first to check before sending someone to another department.
- Give your contact information (name and phone number) to individuals requesting assistance and tell them to get back to you if they don't find an answer or solution.
- Always try to find alternatives to ensure full satisfaction and resolution.

Close the conversation

- Summarize the conversation and (when required) mention the next steps, along with a timeline and way(s) to get in touch.
- Be sure you've answered all questions or concerns by asking if the person has any other questions.
- Thank the person for coming by your office and wish him or her a good day.

Quick tips

- Remember to smile.
- Remind the person that you will do your best to answer the question or resolve the issue.
- If there's a long line of people waiting, make eye contact with people in the line to acknowledge that they're waiting. Apologize for the wait time when it's their turn to speak to you.
- Serve everyone promptly, but don't rush the conversation.
- At the end of the encounter, ask "Is there anything else I can help you with today?"
- Remind them to "feel free to come back if you need further assistance."



Telephone interaction

The University of Ottawa hopes to make every service encounter a positive one. The first few seconds of a call make a powerful first impression, and show how important service excellence and the overall university experience are to the University. Here are some guidelines for telephone interaction.

Initial greeting

- Respond promptly and pleasantly. Smile — a smile can be picked up even over the phone. Project a friendly, enthusiastic and professional attitude.
- Answer every telephone call by the third or fourth ring.
- Identify yourself and your department. Say “Bonjour. Ici Michèle à InfoAdmission. This is Michèle at InfoAdmission. How may I help you?”
- After that, speak to the person in the official language he speaks.
- In French, use the formal “vous” to show respect, unless the person invites you to use the familiar “tu”.

Establish rapport

- Find out the caller’s name and use it often during the call.
- If you’re uncertain of the pronunciation, ask for clarification.
- Focus your attention on the conversation and avoid letting yourself be distracted by other conversations around you.
- Speak to the caller as you would like to be spoken to yourself. Keep your voice cheerful and avoid using a mechanical, bored, impatient or annoyed tone, even if you’ve answered the same question many times before. Remember that this is the first time you’ve answered it for this person.

Quick tips

- Slow down and lower your voice.
- End strong. Thank the person on the line for taking the time to speak with you, and end the call by recapping the action items, if necessary.
- Write down any important information or details during the call, including name and contact information. Repeat information back to the caller if necessary.
- Avoid multi-tasking while on the phone.
- Let the caller hang up first.

Ensure confidentiality when necessary

- Ask student callers for their name and student number and confirm their mailing address.
- If the student number is not available, ask for the student’s name and date of birth to verify through the University system.

Confirm your understanding

- Listen carefully to the question or concern without interrupting.
- Repeat the question or concern back to the person in your own words.

Be the solution

- Respond to the question clearly and make sure the caller understands the answer.
- If you're not sure of the correct answer, arrange to get back to the person with the necessary information, and make sure to follow up.
- Ensure you refer the caller to the right individual or department. When in doubt, call first.
- Give your contact information (name and phone number) to callers and invite them to call back if they don't find an answer or resolve their problem.

"Hold" protocol

- Summarize the conversation and (when required) identify the next steps.
- Ask callers if you can put them on hold and explain why. Thank them for holding. Give them "progress reports" every 45-60 seconds.
- Apologize for excessively long holds. Thank callers for remaining on hold while you find the information on their behalf.
- If you expect the hold to be long (or realize it is becoming so), offer callers the choice of continuing to hold or to be called back once you have the information.
- Keep in mind that callers may be paying long-distance fees. Always provide the option for them to call back later when you put them on hold (University toll-free number: 1-877-868-8292).

Call-transfer protocol

- Only transfer calls if you're certain the transfer is the correct one. Call ahead to confirm.
- Explain to callers the reason for the transfer.
- Always provide callers with the name, department and extension number of the person you're transferring the call to in case the call is accidentally dropped.
- When possible, talk to the person you're transferring the call to prior to the transfer (*warm transfer*) and indicate the caller's language of preference and the reason for the transfer.
- Always provide the option for callers to either call back later or to be transferred.

Responding to voicemail messages

- Respond to voicemail messages within one business day and indicate that you do so in your outgoing message.
- If you will be away from your office for more than a day, change your voicemail message to indicate when you're returning and provide an alternate contact name and phone number to use in your absence.

Close the conversation

- Summarize the conversation and (when required) identify the next steps.
- Check that you have addressed the caller's questions or concerns.
- Ask if the caller has any other questions or requests.
- Thank the person for calling and wish him or her a good day.

Voicemail messages

Provide your first and last name, faculty, department or service in French and English (*Vous avez joint ABC au XYZ | You have reached ABC at XYZ*), then say:

A message in English follows. Je ne serai pas disponible du 28 avril au 2 mai inclusivement. Je pourrai vous répondre à mon retour le 5 mai. (Ajoutez s'il y a un poste de suppléance durant cette période :) Pendant mon absence, vous pouvez communiquer avec (prénom/nom) au 613-562-5800 poste xxxx.

I will be away from the office from April 10 to April 20. I will get back to you when I return on April 23. (If there's a temporary replacement for the period:) While I'm away, you may contact John Smith at 613-562-5800 extension 1234.



Professional attire

Our University community includes students and staff but also parents, visitors, guests and sponsors. Our appearance and how we dress sends a message to everyone. These dress guidelines are intended to provide all staff members with recommendations on appropriate attire while they are working in the role as ambassador of the University of Ottawa.

Professional attire practices:

- Ensure high levels of bodily hygiene at work, at all times.
- When dealing with students or attending professional events representing the University of Ottawa, wear a name tag as the official identification provided by the University.

Wear clothing and accessories that:

- looks professional
- are adapted to the activities of the position
- are clean and in good condition
- carry no offensive messages.

Avoid wearing clothing or accessories of the following styles:

- training wear or accessories
- outdoor wear or accessories
- beach wear or accessories
- caps, tuques, sunglasses, transparent clothing, shorts, uncovered leggings and camisoles (except when covered by a cardigan or jacket, etc.).

Professional Attire Quick Tips

- Avoid heavy fragrances.
- Avoid chewing gum in a professional setting.
- Undergarments should not be visible.
- Remember you are a representative of the University of Ottawa and dress accordingly.

Exceptions regarding clothing and accessories, from the above list, must be directly related to the activities exercised by the staff member as part of his or her functions at the University of Ottawa (e.g. Sports Services).

When in doubt regarding whether or not to wear a certain item of clothing or accessory, discuss the matter with your supervisor beforehand.