Taylor & Francis
Taylor & Francis Group

Perspectives: Policy and Practice in Higher Education

ISSN: (Print) (Online) Journal homepage: www.tandfonline.com/journals/tpsp20

Spamming our students? The use of email as a mass communication tool in higher education

Judith Simpson, Caitlin Branagan, Vonnie Lau Cheng Von & Lily Williams

To cite this article: Judith Simpson, Caitlin Branagan, Vonnie Lau Cheng Von & Lily Williams (18 Dec 2024): Spamming our students? The use of email as a mass communication tool in higher education, Perspectives: Policy and Practice in Higher Education, DOI: 10.1080/13603108.2024.2440705

To link to this article: https://doi.org/10.1080/13603108.2024.2440705

Published online: 18 Dec 2024.

PERSPECTIVES: POLICY AND PRACTICE IN HIGHER EDUCATION
https://doi.org/10.1080/13603108.2024.2440705

Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group

Spamming our students? The use of email as a mass communication tool in higher education

Judith Simpson, Caitlin Branagan, Vonnie Lau Cheng Von and Lily Williams

Faculty of Arts Humanities and Cultures, University of Leeds, UK

ABSTRACT

This paper explores the advantages and disadvantages of using email as a mass communication tool to correspond with students. Staff who write and distribute emails were interviewed, as were a panel of students. The study found that difficulties in targeting messages towards particular student groups meant that students received a lot of emails, not all of them relevant to them; as a result, they read only a small portion of what they received. It also became clear that students preferred to receive messages from staff they knew rather than via unknown administrators.

ARTICLE HISTORY
Received 6 November 2023
Accepted 6 December 2024

KEYWORDS
Word; email; communication; engagement

Introduction

University staff often complain that students do not read their emails. Students, meanwhile, claim that email traffic is overwhelming and often irrelevant. This paper describes a small research project which looked for ways to improve email communication within a large faculty at the University of Leeds.

In additional to personal communications, students in the faculty receive three types of email:

- messages from central teams (including the Student Communication and Engagement team)
- emails about modules, sent via the Virtual Learning Environment
- local 'mass communications' where an identical message is forwarded to multiple recipients by an administrator in their school.

The project focussed on the third type of message. This was partly in response to a recent surge in requests to circulate information, but also because it is at the school level where failures in communication between staff and students are felt most acutely, and this is also the one area where practice can be changed quite quickly. The question was therefore posed: 'what are the impacts of using email as a mass communication tool at school or faculty level?' This was explored through a literature review and through informal interviews with key stakeholders.

Literature review

Advantages and disadvantages of email

Universities have been communicating with their students via email since the 1990s. From the beginning, email was recognised to reduce paper waste (D'Souza 1992, 2), save time, reduce costs and be 'archivable by default' (Berghel 1997). As technology improved, email became a fast and convenient way to send information directly to a student's pc or smartphone (Dawkins 2019; Wu 2022). It was felt to be 'inclusive' in the sense that everybody gets the same information (Defilippis et al. 2020, 7) and believed to reach even those 'reticent students' who avoid face-to-face communication (Weiss and Hanson-Baldauf 2008, n.p.). Moreover, learning to use email helps students to build communication skills (Burton and Winter 2021) and administrative skills (Paudel 2021) which are directly transferable to employment.

However, despite its many advantages, email lacks the cues (such as facial expression, body language and vocal tone) which resolve ambiguity. This can lead to both the instructional content and the emotional tone of the message being misinterpreted (Byron 2008). The fact that emails lack the sensory richness of in-person communication and represent minimal effort on the part of the generator may also mean that they are not valued highly by recipients (Byron 2008).

Using email as a mass communications tool to address students has its own, specific problems, as it represents an impersonal 'top-down' cascade of

CONTACT Judith Simpson j.m.simpson@leeds.ac.uk

information, while an extensive literature on online teaching emphasises that students are most effectively engaged through interactivity and two-way communication (e.g. Buzzetto-More 2007; Gedera, Williams, and Wright 2015; Wu 2022).

Students' attitudes to email

Gilani (2024) – who looked at responses to student communication surveys circulated by a number of universities – found that most students expected their institution to contact them via email. A majority of students also said that they checked email more often than other channels and preferred email to other modes of communication for most topics. Most students reported that 'they receive the right level of information', (Gilani 2024, 274) though this measure of overall satisfaction has been slowly declining in recent years. Gilani (2024) suggests that the drop in satisfaction may be an effect of the Covid19 pandemic. During lock-down email communication inevitably increased and, according to Defilippis et al. (2020), most workers have continued to send more emails than they did before the pandemic – perhaps habitually defaulting to email even when this is not the best communication method for the situation.

However, even when students state that they approve of email, they do not engage with all of it. Ammigan and Laws (2018) quotes the results of a survey conducted by the Education Advisory Board (2017) where 54% of students said that they 'filter[ed] … emails from their academic department selectively'. Several explanations are offered for this. Students are noted to be busy and under pressure from a range of commitments and deadlines (Ammigan and Laws 2018). The emails may be unengaging (Ammigan and Laws 2018). Dawkins (2019, 282), for example, complains that university emails often resemble 'academic essays' and are thus unappealing to students who 'have grown up on a diet of "beautiful" mass emails from the likes of MailChimp and Campaign Monitor!' Alternatively, there may be simply too many emails to engage with. Several writers argue that as the number of emails goes up, recipient engagement goes down (Kong, Zhu, and Konstan 2021) and messages become more likely to be perceived as 'spam' (Rettie 2002). High volumes of email are also argued to create stress in the recipient (Li 2017 Lischer, Safi, and Dickson 2021; Taylor, Fieldman, and Altman 2008;) which may lead to some kind of avoidant behaviours. Carnevale (2006, 3) presents students' selective approach to email as a kind of survival skill, arguing that students have become 'walking spam filters … . [who] have perfected the skill of cutting through the multiple forms of communication that they are bombarded with to find what they are interested in'. In an early paper on email, Merrier, Duff, and Patterson (1999) suggest that messages from known senders will be preferred to those sent via distribution lists and those from people they don't know. While attitudes to email have changed a great deal since the 1990s, there is an obviousness about this statement which suggests this preference might be enduring.

University strategies

Universities have responded to poor student engagement with email in a variety of ways. Many have set up a dedicated student communication team in order to send the kind of co-ordinated, consistent and 'branded' messages that seem most effective in engaging students (Gilani 2024). Others have diversified their communications approach to cover more platforms albeit in a less formal way (Almpanis et al. 2020 Fuller and Pittarese 2012; Quan-Haase 2008) – though this can be risky, given that students' preferences for communication platforms are personal and subject to change (Gilani 2024). The third option is to keep experimenting with email in the hope that they can make it work. This often involves attempts to reduce the volume of emails sent by condensing them into newsletters; however, as Gilani (2024) points out, such newsletters are much less likely to be read than other forms of correspondence.

Departmental email

The emails sent to students by departmental staff, pose a particular set of problems. First, staff rarely know what students have already been told about an issue, or whether they are duplicating or contradicting a prior message from elsewhere (Dawkins 2019, 283f). Second, many emails are written by staff who have not been trained to use email effectively (Dawkins 2019). As cultural background (Holtbrügge, Weldon, and Rogers 2013), age (Lester et al. 2012) and technical ability all shape the way in which people construct emails, departmental emails may be inconsistent in tone. Third, the problem of inconsistent voice is exacerbated because departmental emails have two recurring – and very different – themes: regulations and well-being. Many of the emails forwarded by departmental staff remind students of appropriate modes of behaviour (Wu 2022) official processes and the limitations on institutional liability: often in a way that shifts responsibility from the institution to the reader (Kong, Zhu, and Konstan 2021). Others, however, promote opportunities, offer advice and attempt 'to communicate that we care' (Kong, Zhu, and Konstan 2021, 12). Finally, the fact that departmental emails are often sent by administrators whom the students don't know, may make them less likely to engage (Merrier, Duff, and Patterson 1999) with

this rather strange mixture of admonition and encouragement.

Email best practice

Although the literature fully acknowledges the difficulties of engaging students via email, it also provides some indications of how things could be done better. Staff at all levels should be trained to write effective emails. Following simple rules, such as using clear, descriptive subject lines (Dawkins 2019; Pagliaro 2020), covering only one topic per message (Pagliaro 2020), placing key information at the beginning (Dawkins 2019; Rettie 2002) and maintaining a warm and friendly tone (Dickinson 2017) should make emails more engaging. However, Dawkins (2019) argues that universities must accept – just a professional marketers accept – that mass email will only ever be opened by half the recipients and only around 1% will take the recommended action (such as 'clicking through' to a website for further information). It follows from here that email communication should be personalised where possible.

Method

The question 'what are the impacts of using email as a mass communication tool at school or faculty level?' was next explored through semi-structured interviews with three stakeholder groups: 'generators', 'distributors' and 'recipients'. The generators were staff who regularly wrote messages to be sent via mass email communication. These included senior academics and project staff tasked with enhancing either student attainment or EDI (Equality, Diversity and Inclusion). Nine generators were interviewed. The distributors were staff from the Student Education Service (SES) who forwarded messages using email distribution lists: five SES staff were interviewed. Seventeen 'Student Recipients' also contributed.

Participants were recruited through the researchers' personal networks, using purposive sampling: that is to say participants were chosen because they were likely to have something to say about the topic. While this makes the sample unrepresentative, it also increases the chances of gathering helpful perspectives. The student group included male and female students, undergraduates and taught postgraduates, home and international students studying a wide range of subjects. The students' ages ranged from 20 to 35. Thus, while the sample was not representative, it was diverse. The one factor that linked the students – and perhaps led to the unexpected homogeneity of their responses – was high engagement with both their course and the university community. Although the students were rewarded for their time with a £20 voucher, the funding for this was not confirmed until after the interviews had taken place, so the expectation of a reward is unlikely to have affected results.

The interviews were conducted by student interns via Microsoft Teams. Student interns were chosen to ensure that student participants would feel comfortable voicing their opinions, and that staff knowledge of prior debates about email efficacy did not predetermine the findings. In many cases, two or three stakeholders were interviewed together, using informal conversations to encourage participants to talk about their experiences (Bryman 2008).

Thematic analysis was used to interpret the interview data. This approach was chosen in the hope of eliciting actionable insights quickly. The interviewers identified and shared recurring ideas and emotive topics as these emerged. Then, when the interviews were complete, the provisional findings were checked through a separate round of coding. First 'descriptive codes' (Gibbs 2007, 7) were applied to significant sections of the interview transcripts, then the relationships between these codes were explored (Joffe 2011) in order to build up a picture of the forces that shaped email mass communication and the barriers it encountered.

Findings

In the initial stages of coding some codes arose 'deductively from pre-existing concerns' (Seale 2006, 313): that is to say, staff talked about their 'priorities', 'difficulties' and 'recommendations' because they had been prompted to do so. In a similar way students talked about their 'attitudes to email' because interviewers had used this term. Two more codes – 'voice' and 'overload' – emerged, quite forcefully from interview data.

Generators' priorities

All the message generators interviewed were highly motivated to both inform students and enhance their experience. They wanted to explain how university systems worked, to ensure that students followed the rules and took advantage of opportunities: to '[help] students figure out how to be students' (G3).[1] They were also keen to offer both practical and emotional support: to 'communicate to students that we're here for them and we can help them' (G1). However, some participants also recognised that in some situations it was helpful for 'staff to be able to say, "I gave the students the information"' (G4). This was true of project staff who were expected to disseminate research findings, or tell students about university initiatives, in an auditable or quantifiable way. It was also true of teaching staff, who tried to avoid future appeals by distributing the 'small print' of assessment requirements.

Generators' difficulties

Generators were frustrated by two barriers to effective communication. The first was the impossibility of targeting specific cohorts and the lack of tools to personalise emails, despite knowing that students 'want to be seen as individuals … rather than just a big block of people!' (G5). The second was students' disappointingly low engagement with the emails sent. 'We'll send students emails and then they will ask us things which indicate they haven't read the emails!' (G10). '[Even the] most engaged students don't particularly engage in their emails!' (G8).

Most of the generators attributed low engagement to what one respondent dubbed 'overload'; a situation in which levels of communication – from all sources – seemed simply unmanageable. The collective contributions of message generators enabled us to map the 'overload' phenomena (Figure 1). Overload was described as an indirect result of the Covid19 pandemic. Homeworking had reduced the sense of in-person community on campus, and staff from all over the university were now trying to compensate for this by 'reaching out' to students via email and sharing news about all the good things the university was doing. However, staff fully recognised that in trying to tell the students about *all* the university's initiatives and all the opportunities on offer they were contributing to the 'absolute soup of communications that … students get' (G9). This 'soup' buries important messages, encourages students to 'tune out' (G3) or, worse, and leads to 'physical and mental health problems' including eyestrain and anxiety (G4).

Generators' recommendations

When asked how email communication might be improved, generators focused on the need to reduce overload. They wanted to see investment in tools and training so that students could be sent (only) personalised and relevant messages. They wanted to know what other departments were sending to their students, and they wanted to see a reduction in the expectation that information on anything and everything should be 'pushed out' to students. Although nobody used the term, generators appeared to be asking for a Customer Relation Management (CRM) system.

Distributors' priorities

The SES Officers saw themselves as 'sort of responsible for the quality control on [student comms]' (D1). They believed the function of mass email communication to be the delivery of the information that students might need in a way that was 'evidenced' and 'accessible' (D1). They were also concerned with efficiency. Having learnt from experience that when 'you forward on behalf of someone else you can get deluged with complaints that should have gone to the originator' (D3) they often spent time clarifying and condensing messages before sending them on.

Distributors' difficulties

The SES Officers experienced the need to circulate mass email communications as a significant addition to their workload. They also felt uncomfortable, even guilty, about forwarding some of the messages they were asked to distribute. Where message generators spoke of 'overload', message distributors spoke of 'spam': 'if students haven't asked for it, and if it's not directly related to their learning, in my view, it's spam!' (D2). However, their principal concern was that circulating mass emails made the other messages they sent less effective. SES staff are charged with supporting students and guiding them through the administrative complexities of their course. As most SES staff work primarily from home, email is the only way in which they can 'speak' to students, so they work hard to establish and maintain an authoritative but friendly 'voice'. SES staff hope that when students see an email from them, they will 'be like "ohh, I need to read this!"' (D2). They fear, however, that by forwarding numerous messages of uncertain relevance, they

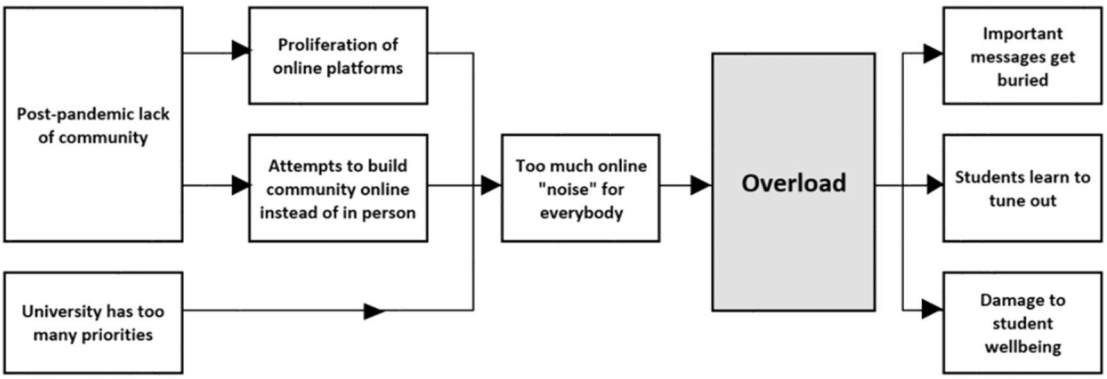

Figure 1. Overload: origins and consequences.

may compromise their 'voice', and bury critical messages.

> Our main concern …. is that, intermingled with 'oh someone's having a coffee morning and you can drop in' [is] 'if you don't do this by this point you will be thrown out of university'! (D3)

Distributors' recommendations

SES staff felt that it was important to reduce the number of emails forwarded. Some respondents described condensing multiple emails into a newsletter to achieve this. In one school, a newsletter had been well-received (but this was 'from the most engaged and confident students – who probably don't speak for everyone' (D1)). In another school, however, staff had used MailChimp to create an email newsletter, only to find that less than 10 students in 1000 opened it! This experience had created a feeling that things would only improve if SES staff started refusing to circulate a lot of the messages they were sent.

Students' attitudes to email

When asked how they approached email, the majority of students interviewed said that they checked their emails daily. A couple checked on their phone every time they got an email notification, one noting that emails caused her stress, the other explaining that he had to clear the notifications because of his OCD. Two students only checked their emails once or twice a week, one of these admitting that he put it off because emails brought feelings of negativity.

Most students felt they received too many emails. A minority saw the volume of emails as evidence of the University's 'care', but others were overwhelmed:

> In my first year, like there were so many emails being sent out that I basically just gave up …. I'm an international student, so I didn't know like how the whole email thing works here … (SUI3).

Nobody felt able to read everything. Students spoke positively about the messages that related to modules they were studying but were critical of the 'dear student' mass communications, which most described as 'irrelevant' and some described as 'spam'. Interestingly, students described a remarkably consistent strategy for filtering their emails. They read all the emails relating to their modules, then prioritised the rest using the name of the generator and the subject line. Messages from teaching staff were welcomed, but students rarely read messages from unknown generators, messages sent to all students or newsletters.

The students were critical of the quality of emails received, stating that these were badly written, often too long, and that they didn't highlight critical information quickly enough. One student complained that they were often 'like an essay!' (SUH1).

Students' recommendations

When asked for their recommendations for future communications, students stated unequivocally that they needed to receive less email. Specifically, irrelevant information and duplication needed to be reduced.

> if I were to receive less emails but more focused on the ones that are important to me, then I would be more likely to open them and read them. (SUH1)

Several students felt that they should be allowed to opt out of certain kinds of communication, citing in particular community-building events and well-being advice.

Refining the codes

The process of refining and aggregating the codes identified a clearer set of motivations and barriers (Figure 2). The central motivations for both categories of staff appear to be 'supporting students' and 'evidencing provision of information' while students are simply trying to 'identify relevant information'.

The barriers and problems can also be summarised as a short list. Message generators are concerned by their 'inability to target and personalise emails' and by 'low student engagement'. Message distributors share the concern for 'low student engagement', alongside worries about 'loss of voice' and 'spam'. For students, the concerns appear to be 'spam' and 'overload'. For all that 'overload' was a term coined by staff, it aptly expressed student concerns about 'random emails' (SUI4), anxiety about missing out on 'buried' information (SUH2, SPI4) and 'giving up' (SUI3).

Student likes and dislikes could also be summarised quite simply. Students were most interested in matters pertaining to their studies and they wanted to receive communications from named and known individuals. They didn't like long or irrelevant emails.

Discussion

When the key themes are presented in summary, a contradiction appears between the aspirations of staff and students. Staff (mindful of the risk of appeals, and perhaps remembering situations where students might have made better decisions had they been better informed) want to share a lot of information with students. They also want to engage and

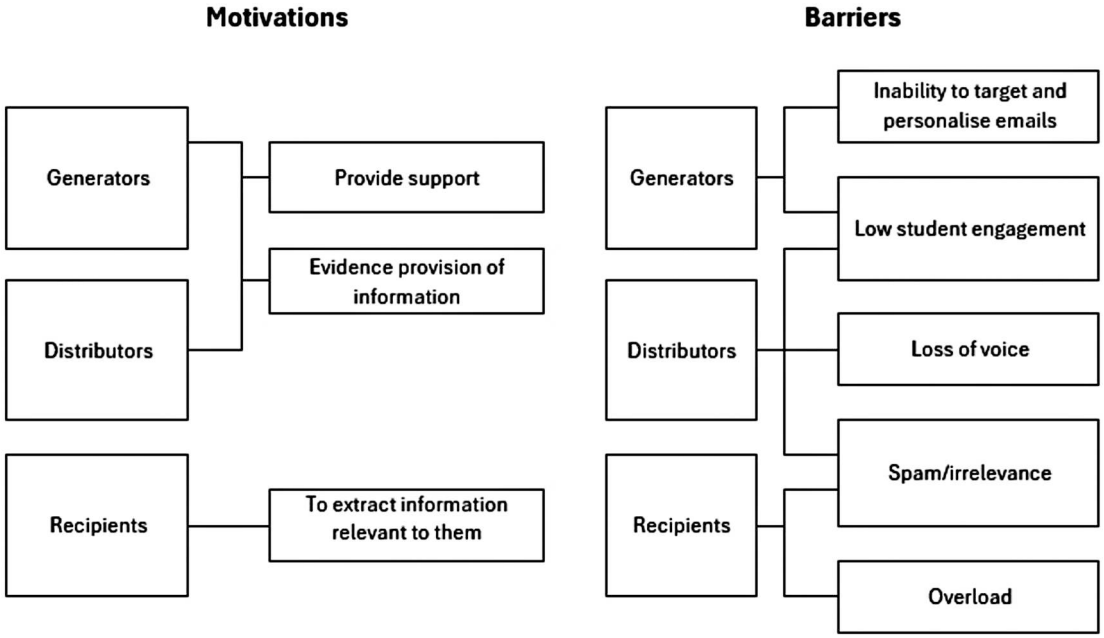

Figure 2. Thematic diagram.

support students. Students would prefer less information. Universities are in a difficult situation. Students expect to be provided with necessary information but seem unprepared to read it. There is a sense in which this is an eternal problem (students did not read paper handbooks or welcome packs either) but email volume and therefore 'overload' does seem to have been accentuated by the pandemic. Staff and students are less likely to meet on campus now that hybrid working is the norm, and the 'email habits' developed in the pandemic are still in operation.

Nevertheless, considering some of the barriers to effective communication does suggest some possible strategies. It is the staff's inability to target and personalise emails that create the student's experience of 'spam' and 'overload' and these factors together foster 'low student engagement'. The ideal solution to this would be the introduction of a Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system to integrate all the information held on students in order to 'understand their needs [and] preferences' (Goodhue, Wixom, and Watson 2002, 3; Nair, Chan, and Fang 2007) and send them only tailored and relevant messages. However, like many universities, the University of Leeds uses CRM technology for recruitment but not has not (yet) identified a suitable system for taught student administration. An alternative strategy – which has already been suggested by consultants – might be to distinguish between 'critical' and 'optional' emails and allow students to opt in or out of the latter (The Behavioural Insights Team 2022). In the short term, it is possible that re-routing some student communications may be helpful, and here the discussion of staff 'voice', initiated by SES Officers, presents a useful lens through which to consider email.

SES Officers felt that being forced to speak on matters about which they knew little, as well as about their own expertise, diminished their chance of sustaining an authentic and credible voice. Students, meanwhile, explained that they ignored mails from people they didn't know. There is an implication here that the ideal email should come from an expert who is also known to the recipient. It might therefore be beneficial to introduce SES Officers to students – either 'virtually' or in person – so that their email 'voices' become known and trusted. The same might be true of project staff: if they had access to distribution lists and were introduced to students they might be perceived as useful commentators on a particular issue. Similarly, it could be helpful to route wellbeing messages through personal tutors. One thing which stands out from this study is that the model in which 'faceless' administrators forward emails on multiple subjects is ineffective, because these messages arrive in a 'voice' which students perceive as inconsistent, inauthentic, and rather annoying.

Limitations

This was, of course, a very small study. The fact that the student participants were recruited via the interns' social networks and that the interns had not been trained in interviewing may have increased the possibility of 'experimenter effect'. Additionally, the project relied on anecdotal reports of email quantity and open rates, without including any inbox audits or tracking data. Finally, it is not possible to assess the extent to which the experience and attitudes of the students interviewed would mirror those at other institutions.

Conclusion

Despite these caveats, some of the schools involved in the study felt that the findings were distinctive enough for changes to be made to local practice. Specifically:

(1) faculty staff have been asked to think carefully before sending an email and consider whether another form of communication might be more effective.
(2) some schools have stopped using administrators to circulate mass communications as it was clear that students were simply learning to ignore this individual. In these cases, more information is being sent by academics and personal tutors, and some is being posted on an online information hub where students can access it when needed.

It is, however, too soon to evaluate the effect of these changes.

Possibilities that remain under consideration for the future are

(1) Allowing students to opt out of some communication channels
(2) Offering new students an email induction including an introduction to the staff who will be contacting them this way, thus presenting email communication as the foundation of a supportive relationship.

Note

1. Anonymisation key: Generators are identified by the letter G and a number; SES staff are identified by the letter D and a number; For students, there is a 4-part code: S for student, then U/P for undergraduate/postgraduate, then H/I for home/international, plus a personal number.

Acknowledgements

The authors would like to thank Professor Beth Johnson and Dr Tracey Mollet of the School of Media and Communication for sponsoring and guiding this project. Thanks are also extended to Claire Watson from the School of Design for her enthusiastic support.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

Notes on contributors

Judith Simpson is a Teaching Fellow in the School of Design at the University of Leeds.

Caitlin Branagan is the Assistant School Education Service Manager for the School of Media and Communication at the University of Leeds.

Vonnie Lau Chen Von has recently graduated from the University of Leeds with a Master's in Mechanical Engineering.

Lily Williams has recently graduated from the University of Leeds with a degree in History.

ORCID

Judith Simpson http://orcid.org/0000-0001-7100-1498

References

Almpanis, T., S. Aston, A. Avramenko, S. Beckingham, J. Blake, R. Challen, M. Compton, et al. 2020. *Social Media in Higher Education: Case Studies, Reflections and Analysis*. Cambridge: Open Book Publishers.

Ammigan, R. L., and Laws K. N. 2018. "Communications Preferences Among International Students: Strategies for Creating Optimal Engagement in Programs and Services." *Journal of International Students* 8 (3): 1293–1315. https://doi.org/10.32674/jis.v8i3.54

The Behavioural Insights Team. 2022. *Increasing Engagement with the Plus Programme*. Leeds: University of Leeds.

Berghel, H. 1997. "Email – The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly." *Communications of the ACM* 40:11–15.

Bryman, A. 2008. *Social Research Methods*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Burton, C., and M. A. Winter. 2021. "Benefits of Service-Learning for Students During the COVID-19 Crisis: Two Case Studies." *Scholarship of Teaching and Learning in Psychology* 1–9. https://doi.org/10.1037/stl0000292

Buzzetto-More, N. A. 2007. *Principles of Effective Online Teaching*. Santa Rosa, CA: Informing Science.

Byron, K. 2008. "Carrying Too Heavy a Load? The Communication and Miscommunication of Emotion by Email." *Academy of Management* 33 (2): 309–327.

Carnevale, D. 2006. "E-mail is for old People." *The Chronicle of Higher Education* 53:A27.

Dawkins, R. 2019. "Mass Email at University: Current Literature and Tactics for Future use." *Open Learning: The Journal of Open, Distance and e-Learning* 34 (3): 273–289. https://doi.org/10.1080/02680513.2018.1556090

Defilippis, E., S. M. Impink, M. Singell, J. T. Polzer, and R. Sadun. 2020. "Collaborating during Coronavirus: The Impact of COVID-19 on the Nature of Work." *National Bureau of Economic Research, Working Paper 27612* 1–31. https://doi.org/10.3386/w27612

Dickinson, A. 2017. "Communicating with the online student: the impact of e-mail tone on student performance and teacher evaluations." *Journal of Educators Online* 14 (2): n2.

D'Souza, P. V. 1992. "Electronic Mail in Academic Settings: A Multipurpose Communications Tool." *Educational Technology* 32:22–25.

Education Advisory Board. 2017. *Breaking through the Student Communications Barrier* [Online]. https://www.eab.com/technology/student-success-collaborative/members/events/webconferences/2017/breaking-through-the-student-communications-barrier-for-leadership/eabondemand.

Fuller, M., and T. Pittarese. 2012. "Effectively Communicating with University Students Using Social Media: A Study of Social Media Usage Patterns." 2012 ASCUE Proceedings, 46–58.

Gedera, D., J. Williams, and N. Wright. 2015. "Identifying Factors Influencing Students' Motivation and Engagement in Online Courses." In *Motivation, Leadership and Curriculum Design: Engaging the Net*

Generation and 21st Century Learners, edited by C. Koh, 13–23. Singapore: Springer.

Gibbs, G. R. 2007. "Thematic Coding and Categorizing." *Analyzing Qualitative Data* 703:38–56. https://doi.org/10.4135/9781849208574.n4

Gilani, D. 2024. "Student Attitudes and Preferences Towards Communications from their University – A Meta-Analysis of Student Communications Research within UK Higher Education Institutions." *Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management* 46 (3): 274–290. https://doi.org/10.1080/1360080X.2024.2344234

Goodhue, D. L., B. H. Wixom, and H. J. Watson. 2002. "Realizing Business Benefits through CRM: Hitting the Right Target in the Right way." *MIS Quarterly Executive* 1:79–94.

Holtbrügge, D., A. Weldon, and H. Rogers. 2013. "Cultural Determinants of Email Communication Styles." *International Journal of Cross Cultural Management* 13 (1): 89–110. https://doi.org/10.1177/1470595812452638

Joffe, H. 2011. "Thematic Analysis." In *Qualitative Research Methods in Mental Health and Psychotherapy: A Guide for Students and Practitioners*, edited by D. Harper and A. R. Thompson, 209–223. Chichester: John Wiley & Sons.

Kong, R., H. Zhu, and J. A. Konstan. 2021. "Learning to Ignore: A Case Study of Organization-Wide Bulk Email Effectiveness." *Proceedings of the ACM on Human-Computer Interaction* 5 (CSCW1): 1–23. https://doi.org/10.1145/3449154

Lester, S. W., R. L. Standifer, N. J. Schultz, and J. M. Windsor. 2012. "Actual versus Perceived Generational Differences at Work: An Empirical Examination." *Journal of Leadership & Organizational Studies* 19 (3): 341–354. https://doi.org/10.1177/1548051812442747

Li, C.-Y. 2017. "Why do Online Consumers Experience Information Overload? An Extension of Communication Theory." *Journal of Information Science* 43 (6): 835–851. https://doi.org/10.1177/0165551516670096

Lischer, S., N. Safi, and C. Dickson. 2021. "Remote Learning and Students' Mental Health During the Covid-19 Pandemic: A Mixed-Method Enquiry." *Prospects* 51 (4): 1–11.

Merrier, P. A., T. B. Duff, and D. Patterson. 1999. "Form and Function of Messages Sent through a University's Email Distribution List." *Office Systems Research Journal* 17:19–28.

Nair, C., S. Chan, and X. Fang. 2007. "A Case Study of CRM Adoption in Higher Education." 2007 Information Resources Management Association International Conference. Citeseer.

Pagliaro, M. 2020. "Enhancing the Use of E-mail in Scientific Research and in the Academy." *Heliyon* 6 (1):e03087. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.heliyon.2019.e03087

Paudel, P. 2021. "Online Education: Benefits, Challenges and Strategies During and After COVID-19 in Higher Education." *International Journal on Studies in Education (IJonSE)* 3: 70–85.

Quan-Haase, A. 2008. "Instant Messaging on Campus: Use and Integration in University Students' Everyday Communication." *The Information Society* 24 (2): 105–115. https://doi.org/10.1080/01972240701883955

Rettie, R. 2002. *Email Marketing: Success Factors*. Kingston University. https://eprints.kingston.ac.uk/id/eprint/2108/1/paper.html

Seale, C. 2006. "Coding and Analysing Data." In *Researching Society and Culture*, edited by C. Seale. 2nd ed, 305–321. London: Sage.

Taylor, H., G. Fieldman, and Y. Altman. 2008. "E-mail at Work: A Cause for Concern? The Implications of the New Communication Technologies for Health, Wellbeing and Productivity at Work." *Organisational transformation and social change* 5 (2): 159–173. https://doi.org/10.1386/jots.5.2.159_1

Weiss, M., and D. Hanson-Baldauf. 2008. "E-mail in Academia: Expectations, Use, and Instructional Impact." *Educause Quarterly* 31:42.

Wu, H. 2022. "Mass Email Risk Communication: Lessons Learned from COVID-19-Triggered Campus-Wide Evictions in Canada and the United States." *PLoS ONE* 17:e0266242.