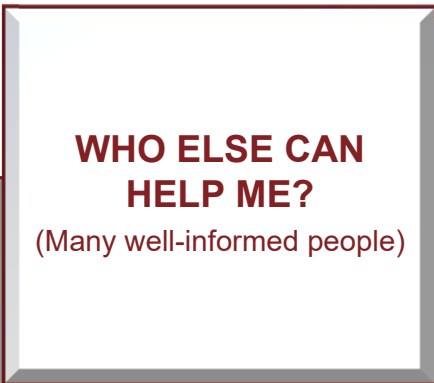
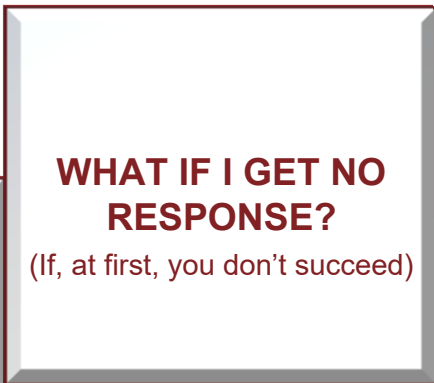
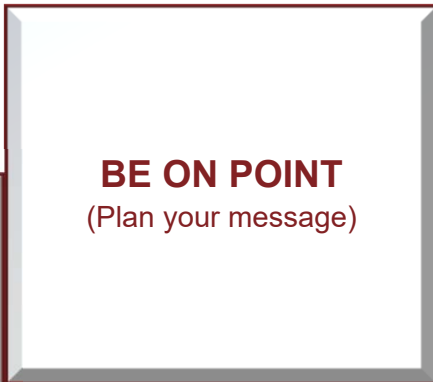


# RESOLVING ACADEMIC PROBLEMS

A Step-by-Step Guide for Students

*(Click on each box for pointers)*



## **START LOCAL (Contact Instructor)**

Many students are afraid to communicate with teachers, yet letting that person know that you are having difficulty in class is the most direct way to get the help you need or resolve the academic issue you are facing. Furthermore, all instructors are expected to communicate with students and to manage their courses in ways that promote learning. You can find contact information for your instructor in the course syllabus, or in <https://my.fsu.edu> beneath your adviser information, and email them, or you can meet with the instructor during remote or on-campus office hours.

## **BE ON POINT (Plan your message)**

It can be intimidating to question your instructor, so when you do so, it is helpful to think through what your actual question is or to line up your discussion points ahead of time. It is best to avoid judgmental words like “It’s not fair,” “You did this for my friend, and I want you to do this for me,” or “I just don’t get it”. Instead, focus the discussion on topics like: “I tried to (solve this homework problem, complete this assignment, etc.) and got this far but am stuck here,” or “I see that points were taken off of this (test question, paper, etc.), but I am not understanding why my answer is incomplete,” or “Can you review my grades and explain how you are calculating my final grade?”

## WHAT IF I GET NO RESPONSE? (If, at first, you don't succeed...)

Don't take lack of response as a lack of interest on the part of your instructor - remember that faculty and other instructors are busy people who might not be able to respond to emails quickly. In fact, they are often most busy right when students reach out to them more, like before or immediately after exams, lectures, etc. Please allow some time for your instructor to reply. If you don't get a response in a reasonable amount of time, try emailing again with the same message.

Each instructor has a supervisor, and if you receive no response after a few attempts, it is appropriate to take your concerns to that supervisor. But how do you find that person? If your instructor is a graduate teaching assistant (TA), then the best person to contact is the faculty coordinator for that course. If you are uncertain who that is, you can ask your academic advisor. All faculty instructors are supervised by their department chair or school director, or in some cases, by an associate dean of the college. In general, if you know the department that your instructor is in, you can figure out who the chair is from that department's website, which you can find with a web search. Clicking the "Contact Us" button on the academic department's website will lead you to email addresses designed to help students find answers to their questions – try <https://www.english.fsu.edu/contact-us> as an example.

If you do contact your instructor's supervisor, realize that that person generally won't know specifics about grades, homework questions, excused absences, etc. Instead, contact the supervisor and let them know that you have been unable to get a response from your instructor despite repeated attempts. You can also re-send your original email to your instructor, copying the person's supervisor, and indicate that you have not received a response. Getting the supervisor involved can get a response to your question as well as ensure that if something is going wrong, someone in authority finds out about it.

## WHO ELSE CAN HELP ME? (Many helpful people)

- Sometimes, it might help to talk through your situation with a trusted person, like your academic advisor (see: <https://advisingfirst.fsu.edu/Team/Find-Your-Advisor>) or, in cases that also involve non-academic issues, a case manager (see: <https://dsst.fsu.edu/cms/connect-with-us>) before laying out the facts in an email to your instructor.
- Associate deans in academic colleges (like Undergraduate Studies, Arts & Sciences, Social Sciences, etc.) often help resolve difficult problems that can't be managed effectively in academic departments or schools. You might be asked to talk with an associate dean or your department chair will consult with them.
- The University Ombudsman is there to help any undergraduate student learn to resolve academic problems effectively; contact Jill Flees at: [undergraduateombuds@fsu.edu](mailto:undergraduateombuds@fsu.edu).
- If you have worked with the right people and the problem is still unresolved, you might need to file a grade appeal (<https://www.fda.fsu.edu/academic-resources/academic-integrity-and-grievances/grade-appeals-system>) or pursue a general academic grievance (<https://www.fda.fsu.edu/academic-resources/academic-integrity-and-grievances/general-academic-appeals-student-grievances>).
- Dealing with something serious that is not an academic problem or an emergency situation in which you should call Florida State University Police at 644-1234? You can make a report through <https://report.fsu.edu/> and the right person will get your report automatically.