Netiquette

Studying online does not mean that you are working in isolation. There are people on the other side of your screen, so the words you use really do matter. Netiquette can be defined as a practical code of behaviour for online interactions. Consider how you want to sound or appear to your tutors and your peers, and think carefully before hitting the send button. Here are some general guidelines and tips for communicating in online forums or via email.

General guidelines

- Always treat staff and peers with respect.
- Check your language, tone, grammar and spelling before you post your comments. A poorly edited post may come across as unprofessional and careless.
- Use clear and concise language.
- Avoid slang or abbreviations used in messaging (e.g., 'you' not 'u').
- Use proper punctuation.
- Avoid using the caps lock feature, AS IT CAN LOOK LIKE YOU ARE SHOUTING!
- Be cautious when using humour or sarcasm as tone is something that can get misinterpreted in an online environment. Your joke may be taken seriously or seen as offensive.
- Find out how your tutor would like you to communicate (e.g., email or online forum). This will be explained early on in your course site.
- If you need to contact your tutor about something personal or confidential, do not post it in the online forum where everyone in the course can see. Contact your tutor via email instead.

When posting in online forums

- Share your knowledge and ideas respectfully.
- Be inclusive by inviting others to contribute to the points you make.
- Avoid dominating the conversation.
- If you disagree with what someone has written in a forum and would like to express your position, do so respectfully and politely.
- Challenge ideas rather than the people offering the ideas. The aim should be to increase everyone's knowledge rather than put people down.
- Keep in mind that in online forums, many people will see what you type, so carefully check your words for tone and professionalism before hitting send.

When emailing

- Find out how staff would like to be addressed - when in doubt, use their proper title (e.g., Dr. Marks).
- Include a clear subject-heading that lets the recipient know what the topic is about.
- Include a greeting at the beginning (e.g. Dear Dr. Marks,) and a salutation (e.g. Kind regards,).