

Professionalism in Graduate Studies

Succeeding in Academic Environments and Beyond

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Learning Centers

Graduate Workshop Series



Professionalism

Quick Discussion:

- What does professionalism look like in an academic setting?”
- What are some of the biggest challenges to professionalism?



Professionalism Introduction



<https://youtu.be/y99QRXBpNcw>

The case of Impulsive Ian:

- **Clinical Operations Manager** at a pharmaceutical company sends a brief email late in the day:

“Need finalized trial enrollment data on my desk by 9:00 a.m. tomorrow.”

- **Impulsive Ian** feels insulted by the tone and replies:

“I’ve been managing these datasets long before you joined this program, and I don’t appreciate being spoken to like this. Regulatory review takes time, and emails like this ignore the realities of clinical research.”

- He copies the program director, regulatory affairs lead, and two senior executives, hoping to signal the seriousness of the issue.

The case of Impulsive Ian:



Discuss the email exchange:

- What feels unprofessional?
- What assumptions are being made?

Discuss the outcomes:

- What went wrong?
- What were the consequences?
- What alternatives existed?

EMOTIONALLY INTELLIGENT PROFESSIONALS

Try not to make an important decision while in
the grip of strong emotions.

Emotionally Intelligent Ian

Emotionally Intelligent Ian asks for a brief meeting.

“I saw your message about the enrollment data. I want to make sure we’re aligned on timing and regulatory review requirements. Would you have a few minutes to discuss?”

During the conversation, the manager explains that the request is driven by an unexpected leadership briefing tied to an FDA inquiry. The associate clarifies what can realistically be delivered by the deadline and proposes a partial dataset with a clear plan for final validation.

Outcome: Tension is reduced. Regulatory integrity is preserved. Trust and credibility are strengthened

Emotionally Intelligent Ian:



What changed?

- How did tone and timing matter?
- What lesson applies to you?

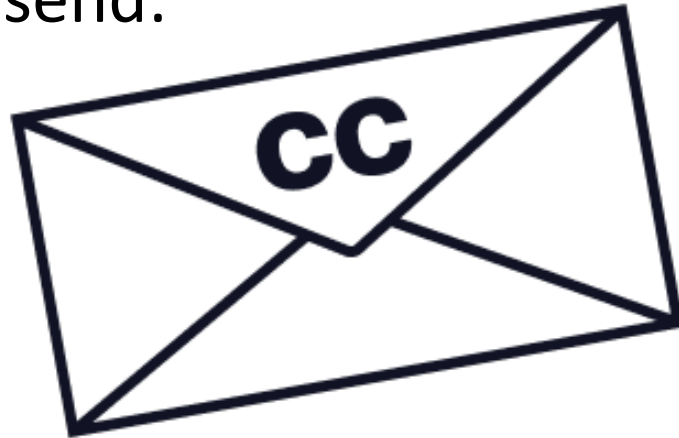
Student-identified factors:

- Self-regulation
- Channel choice
- Clarifying intent
- Private vs. public response

Communicating Effectively

Know when to send:

- “To”
- “CC”
- “BCC”
- “Reply”
- “Reply all”
- “Forward”



Scenario:

- You need to follow up on a missed deadline
- Who goes in To / CC / BCC?
- Why?

EMOTIONALLY INTELLIGENT PROFESSIONALS

Are aware of their own emotions

Develop ways to manage their emotions

Are good at perceiving emotions in others

Communicate effectively

Build alliances

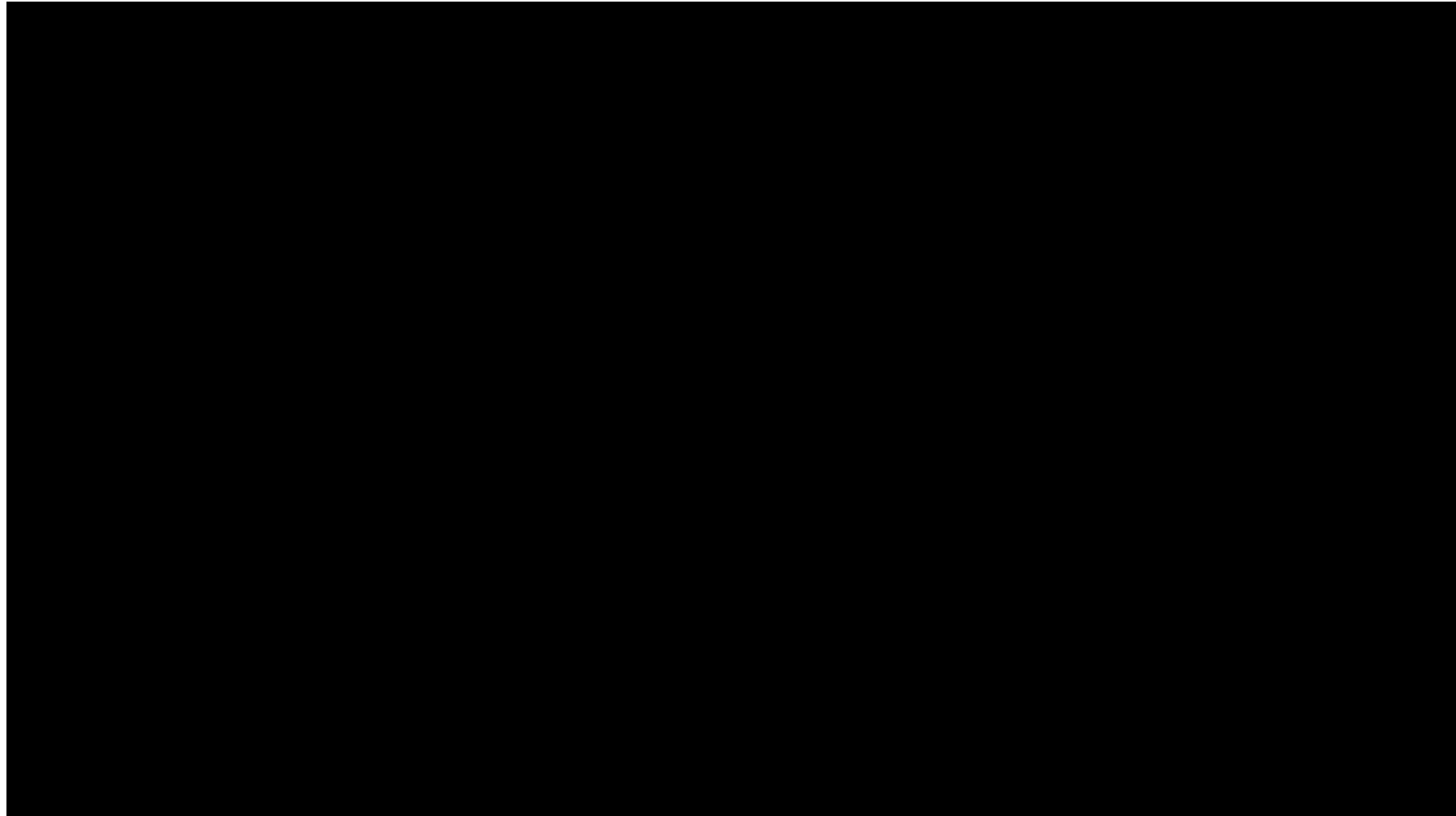


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IN THE DIGITAL AGE

Your reputation as a professional can be destroyed with one reckless email, text message or social media post.

Professional Social Media



<https://youtu.be/42nef47wOjM>



What could be problematic with the following Facebook page?

Write down 3-4 things Alisha could consider changing to improve the professionalism of her social media presence.



What could be problematic with the following Instagram post?

If you were to post on Instagram using this scenario, how would you change it?

Would you even post at all?

Caption: Awful dinner sponsored by ✨ DEADLINE PANIC ✨ . Ate this slop while waiting for my code to run, my PI to reply, and regulatory comments that were due yesterday! If you squint, this is basically a Phase IV study where I have better things to do. 🍜🧪

Hashtags: #GradStudentGourmet #InstantRamen #PharmaLife #PeerReviewedByMe #BenchToBowl #ComplianceWho #DinnerIsAProtocol

FIRST IMPRESSIONS ARE OFTEN DIGITAL

Think-Pair-Share:

- What would appear if someone Googled you?
- What impression would that create?
- What posts could raise red flags?
- What feels private but isn't?

As a Graduate Student

From the Rutgers University – School of Graduate Studies Handbook

We expect and encourage:

- Honesty and Integrity
- Respect and tolerance
- Sensitivity to differences among individuals
- Professionalism
- Attention to goals and responsibilities
- Timely and constructive feedback
- Acceptance of constructive feedback

As a Graduate Student

From the Rutgers University – School of Graduate Studies Handbook

The following are inappropriate behaviors:

- Mistreatment, abuse, bullying, or harassment, whether by actions or language
- Unprofessional criticism
- Requests for personal services
- Assigning tasks as punishment or retribution Sexual assault or sexual harassment
- Discrimination
- Indifference to inappropriate behaviors that are witnessed

What would be examples of inappropriate behaviors?

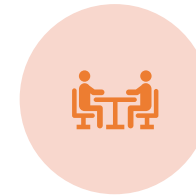
As a Trainee



Communication



Conduct



Interpersonal
Relationships



Accountability



Academic
Integrity



Working
With Faculty
Advisors

Communication

Check your
university email
regularly

Use personal email
for your external
professional
purposes

Reply promptly

Use proper email
etiquette and
professional
language

Proofread and edit

Follow up politely

Conduct

Respect others in
person and online

Uphold responsibilities
to an education free of
harassment

Be an active listener

Maintain a
professional presence
online

Uphold university
professional standards
and codes of conduct

Interpersonal Relationships

Engage	Engage with faculty, staff, and peers regularly and respectfully.
Participate	Participate in department events and use campus resources.
Collaborate	Prioritize collaboration over competition with peers.
Build	Build teamwork skills to support long-term professional success.
Appreciate	Appreciate cultural and background diversity.
Address	Address disagreements calmly and civilly.
Support	Support peers, build your network, and practice self-care.

Accountability

Keep commitments
to build trust and
reliability

Don't overextend;
meet deadlines
consistently

Respond to
communications
quickly and
professionally

Tackle challenges
with a solution-
focused mindset

Communicate early
and offer
alternatives when
necessary

Own your mistakes

Academic Integrity



Do your own work without unauthorized assistance.



Cite all sources and contributors correctly.



Collect and report data honestly and ethically.



Treat peers fairly; never enable dishonesty.



Follow ethical and professional standards in your field.



Know, follow, and affirm Rutgers' Academic Integrity Policy.

Academic Integrity Violations

- Plagiarism
- Cheating
- Fabrication
- Facilitation of Dishonesty
- Academic Sabotage
- Violation of Research or Professional Ethics
- Violations Involving Potentially Criminal Activity

Academic Integrity Discussion



Small-group discussion:

- What behaviors feel normal but are risky?
- Where do students get confused?

How would you respond if:

- A peer asks for inappropriate help?
- You notice questionable behavior?

Working With Faculty Advisors



Communicate
regularly

Set clear
expectations
and timelines

Submit
chapter drafts
continuously

Rely on your
chair for
guidance

Handle
feedback
objectively

Understand
dissertation
requirement.

Working With Faculty Advisor Scenario

You submit a working draft of your dissertation to your committee. You first receive feedback from your statistician. You then receive feedback from your PI that conflicts with your statistician.

- How would you navigate this feedback?
- What are some organizational structure considerations?
- What is a professional and respectful response?
- What would your email response look like?



Working With Faculty Advisors

EFFECTIVE STRATEGIES



CLARIFY
EXPECTATIONS



SYNTHESIZE
FEEDBACK



COMMUNICATE
RESPECTFULLY

As a Professional

THE FIVE P's OF PROFESSIONALISM

Purpose

Personal Brand

People

Performance

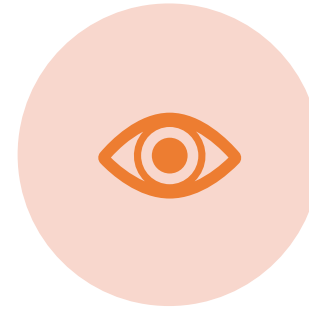
Plan

THE FIVE P'S REFLECTION

- Purpose
- Personal Brand
- People
- Performance
- Plan



**WHICH P IS
STRONGEST RIGHT
NOW?**



**WHICH NEEDS
THE MOST
ATTENTION?**

PROFESSIONAL EXPECTATIONS

Write down 2–3 behaviors you will commit to.

- Share with your group
- Agree on top shared standards



If you had to name only **ONE** thing to remember about professionalism and communication, what is your big **take-away**?

LC Resources

In-person and virtual available for all services



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Tutoring – Stats tutoring available



Academic Coaching – Open to all students seeking to improve self-management, reading, test preparation, time management, or study skills.



Academic Success Workshops – Graduate Workshop Series



Writing Tutoring – Writing assistance for graduate students

Conclusion



rlc.rutgers.edu/eval

Professionalism in Graduate Studies

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