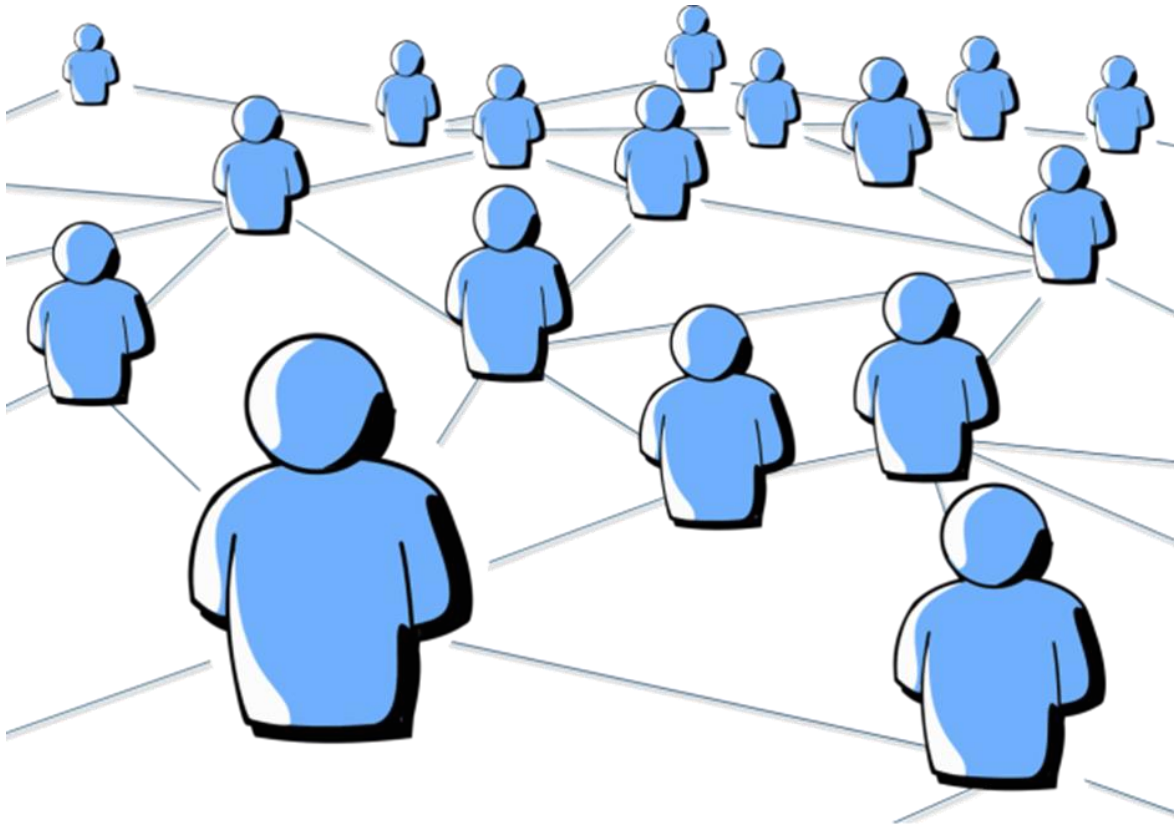


EXPRESS YOURSELF CLEARLY – AND WITH STYLE

Communication in the Academic Environment



Plain Language Student Research Club
Warsaw 2025

Express Yourself Clearly – And With Style. Communication in the Academic Environment
Plain Language Student Research Club, Warsaw 2025

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Warsaw 2026

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Good morning, hello!

We are glad that you have come across our guide. It does not matter whether you are just beginning your university journey or already have several versions of your thesis saved on your desktop – you will certainly find something useful here.

We want to talk to you about communication - specifically, about language. It is both our area of expertise and our passion. In this guide, we will show you how to navigate communication in the academic environment. It is a fairly specific space, governed by certain established rules. And believe us – it is much better to know them than to be unaware of them. 😊



We know how big a shift starting university can be and how it feels to enter an entirely new environment. Suddenly, you stop going to "lessons" and start attending "classes". You no longer just go to school; instead, you hurry to the university each morning. Everything changes – the surroundings, the atmosphere, and the people involved. Even the language changes – and not always in ways that are immediately obvious!

That is precisely why we have prepared this guide for you. You will learn:

- how is the University structured and whom to contact regarding various matters,
- how to avoid communication errors and how to address different people properly,
- how to write a correct and polite email,
- how to prepare an application.

All of this follows [the principles of effective communication and plain language](#), and – above all – complies with the norms of [Polish linguistic politeness](#).

Who are we?

We are fellow members of the University of Warsaw community – undergraduate and graduate students, including those doing their PhD.. Since 2019, we have been running the [Plain Language Student Research Club](#) (Koło Naukowe Prostego Języka) at the Faculty of Polish Studies. Our focus is on communication. We are interested in how to use language so that we can understand one another as clearly and as efficiently as possible. Over the years, we have gathered experience and insights on how communication works at the University, and we are excited to share this knowledge with you.

What is plain language?

Language can serve many purposes and take many forms. Plain language assumes that what we want to communicate is understandable and useful to the recipient. The term refers to a movement that promotes clear and transparent communication, particularly in administrative contexts. Thanks to this initiative, institutions and companies (but not only them!) begin to speak to us in a more human, accessible way and move away from bureaucratic jargon.

The most important principles of plain language

We could write about this at length. 😊 If you want to write in plain language, remember the following principles:

1. Focus on the recipient

Do not be a communicative egoist. Think about what information your recipient needs, and place the most important one at the beginning.

2. Write clearly

Make sure your message is not just a block of text. Divide it into paragraphs and use subheadings. Subheadings make the argument clearer and indicate what you are discussing in specific parts of the text.

3. Use natural language

In plain language, we try to avoid:

- unnatural word order (e.g. *the exam I must pass* instead of *I must pass the exam*),
- analytic constructions (e.g. *to conduct research* instead of *to research*),
- the passive voice (e.g. *the research was conducted* instead of *we conducted the research*),
- participles (e.g. *being studied, while conducting*).

Psycholinguistic research shows that all of these hinder comprehension. We tend to value verbs over nouns (e.g. *we conducted research* rather than *the conducting of research*).

4. Use understandable vocabulary and build simple sentences

Use vocabulary that your recipient is likely to know and use. Construct sentences that are straightforward and easy to follow. Complex, multi-clause sentences increase the risk of misunderstanding.

5. Be concise and specific

Follow the rule: one sentence, one thought. Avoid unnecessary details and excessive length. This is communication in plain language in a nutshell. However, how these principles are applied depends on [the recipient, the context, and the communication channel](#).

Plain language works differently in texts addressed to a broad audience than in an email to a course instructor. In the latter case, you cannot allow yourself the same level of naturalness and informality.

Remember!

Writing in a complicated or obscure way does not show you are intelligent or eloquent. Complex vocabulary and convoluted grammar usually indicate an inability to adjust language to the audience – or an attempt to hide gaps in knowledge or social competence. If you truly understand something, you are able to explain it simply.

Plain language at the University of Warsaw

- In November 2023, the University of Warsaw signed [the Plain Language Declaration](#) and committed itself to promoting friendly and comprehensible communication.
- In August 2024, Professor Sławomir Żółtek, Vice-Rector for Student Affairs and Quality of Education, established the Plain Language Team at the University of Warsaw.
- The idea of plain language has been developing at UW for years mainly thanks to the [Polish Language Foundation](#) and, from a research perspective, through the Laboratory of Effective Communication operating at the Faculty of Polish Studies.
- Students are also actively involved. Since 2019, the [Plain Language Student Research Circle](#) (that's us 😊) has been active at the Faculty of Polish Studies.

Linguistic politeness

So far, we have briefly explained what plain language is and what its main principles are. However, there are also important rules of Polish linguistic politeness – rules that explain why replying *OK* to a formal email or suggesting that your instructor switch to first-name terms may not be appropriate (even if it feels more convenient).

Forms of address and respectful distance – this may sound like something from a period drama, but they are very much part of everyday academic life. These elements play an important role in Polish linguistic politeness and remain highly relevant at the University (and not only there!). We will discuss this in more detail in later chapters; for now, here are a few politeness strategies worth knowing.

1. Symmetry of polite behaviour

In other words: politeness for politeness. If someone asks how you are, answer – and then ask the same question in return.

2. Solidarity with your interlocutor

That is, empathy in communication. It is polite to verbally express shared emotions: offering congratulations or condolences, expressing support, extending invitations, or simply greeting someone warmly.

3. The strategy of polite withdrawal

- **Downplaying oneself**

Do you sometimes see people feeling awkward when receiving compliments? If so, this is still a fairly common phenomenon in Polish linguistic politeness, although less dominant than it used to be. Traditionally, in formal communication we tended to distance ourselves from praise or even deny it. Today, however, a simple and natural *Thank you* is increasingly accepted – and recommended. Psychological awareness and cultural change support accepting compliments with gratitude, which is worth noting as an important evolution in our linguistic *savoir-vivre*.

- **Omitting the interlocutor's fault**

This strategy is especially visible in responses to apologies. Almost everyone has replied to *I'm sorry* with *It's nothing*, *No problem*, or *Don't worry about it* at least once.

- **Taking the blame upon oneself**

We are expected to apologize – for bumping into someone, for causing inconvenience, for interrupting, or for disturbing someone's peace. This traditional attitude remains strong, although alongside it there is a growing tendency not to overemphasize one's guilt, especially when the situation does not require it. As a result, communication becomes more balanced, and responsibility for conversational comfort is more evenly shared.

Remember!

Politeness strategies are important because they help us communicate effectively and without unnecessary misunderstandings. They are meant to ensure that all parties feel respected. However, if someone uses "politeness" as a way to cross your boundaries, you have the right to respond. The submissive position that we often adopt as students must never justify inappropriate behaviour or abuse. We may downplay the interlocutor's faults – but only to a reasonable extent. Moreover, remember that politeness is, to some degree, a social convention that does not always reflect how we truly feel. You may respond to a professor's praise with *It's nothing special* while still being aware of a job well done.

Communication Context – Who, What, and Where

Your first steps at University can be challenging. Not only because it operates according to rules vastly different from those of secondary school but also due to the sheer number of new places, institutions, names and terms, which means we need to get to know them, and become familiar with the rules to which they are subject. In this chapter, you will be able to find explanations of how the most important places and people operate. This will help you understand how the University and your Faculty function, as well as to whom address specific questions or issues.

University Structure

General Level

The administrative system of the University is a complex one. It enables, however, its various units to operate efficiently, allowing them to carry out their research, teaching, and administration. Within the overall structure of the University several key figures can be distinguished:

Rector – holds the highest authority at the University and serves as its official representative to the outside world. The Rector's term of office lasts four years. The Rector manages the University, makes decisions on the most important matters, and supervises how each Faculty and organisational unit functions. The Rector also ensures that the University implements its development strategies and that both internal and national regulations are followed.

Chancellor – is responsible for the University's administrative and financial affairs. The Chancellor's main duties include managing finances, infrastructure, and material resources. The Chancellor supervises the administrative staff, the efficient functioning of buildings, investments, and organisational matters which support the teaching and research processes. The Chancellor cooperates both with the Rector and with other university staff to ensure effective management.

Vice-rectors – support the Rector in managing the University. Each Vice-Rector is responsible for a specific field, such as research, didactics, finances, or international cooperation.

Student Government Board – looks after the students' rights, represents their interests before the university authorities, and works to ensure the highest possible quality of education. In addition, the Board organises various events, such as integration meetings,

charities, festivals, or *Juwenalia* (annual student festival held in May offering a range of activities, concerts, and celebrations). You can join the Board as well! Recruitment usually takes place in late October or early November.

Faculty Level

Let us now move on to a lower level of the administrative structure – one that you will deal with much more often during your time at the University. This level includes faculties, which are the basic organisational units of the University:

Dean – heads the faculty. Although students do not interact with the Dean on a daily basis, the position the Dean holds significantly influences how the faculty operates. The Dean does not only represent the faculty externally but also acts as an internal leader. This is the person who supervises the faculty staff and determines the responsibilities of Vice-Deans. It is noteworthy that at the Faculty of Polish Studies or the Faculty of Sociology, for example, the feminine form of this title (*Dziekana*) is sometimes used by women holding this position. It is also important to mention that not every woman serving as Dean wishes to be addressed this way. You can find out more about this issue later.

Vice-Dean – the Dean's deputy. There are usually several Vice-Deans at each faculty. Each of them is responsible for a different area. The scope of their duties is indicated in their title (e.g. Vice-Dean for Student Affairs, or Vice-Dean for Research). Vice-Deans for Student Affairs make decisions on matters such as conditional passes, extensions of examination sessions, or leaves. As a result, it is the Vice-Dean for Student Affairs (also referred to as the Head of the Didactic Unit) that students contact most often addressing to them applications regarding, for instance, changing the groups, mode of study, or university.

Dean's Office – the office handling administrative matters. However, if your faculty has a Student Affairs Office, you should direct all student-related matters there rather than the Dean's Office.

Student Affairs Office – a place you will visit many times during your studies. Transferring to a different group, changing your thesis supervisor, submitting a scholarship application, or entering the appropriate magic formula into the USOS – all of this is handled by the staff of this Office. Usually several people work there, each responsible for a specific degree programme, or the 1st year counsellor.

Faculty Student Government Board – it is composed of representatives of the faculty students, looks after their community, and deals with “local” matters. The Board organises academic life at the faculty, prepares initiatives (e.g. charities), and works alongside faculty

authorities by giving opinions on proposals for such matters as new degree programmes or planned changes.

Head of Studies – is responsible for all students enrolled in a given programme. They deal with issues connected to the curriculum and solve all kinds of problems concerning the programme.

1st-year Counsellor – a person you can approach with everyday issues, such as class organisation, course completion, or personal matters affecting your studies.

The faculty structure encompasses many more elements, of course. It may also include institutes, departments, as well as various divisions, labs, and libraries, each managed by a designated supervisor. You will most certainly come into contact with their staff during your academic journey.

The Academic Community

The academic community is a complex network of relationships in which all members, from students to professors, play an important role. Apart from the administrative structure, there is also research and academic hierarchy, which reflects the experience and scholarly achievements. Mutual respect is crucial in academia, which is why it is important to address lecturers using appropriate academic titles, especially in formal correspondence. In the next chapter, you will find out where to check how to correctly address members of the academic community.

Professor – a person with extensive academic experience and achievements, having the title of professor, as well as someone employed in such a position (e.g. University of Warsaw Professor).

Habilitated Doctor – habilitation is an academic degree certifying research achievements and entitling one to apply for the position of university professor.

Doctor – people in this group usually hold positions of assistant professors or assistants.

Master's degree holder – holders of this degree are usually in the process of doctoral studies. They may teach certain classes and be employed as assistants.

Administrative Staff – are responsible for the smooth operating of the University. They handle financial matters, human resources, student services, academic documentation, and support for academic staff.

PhD Candidates/Students Community – consists of people who conduct research and are in the process of preparing their PhD dissertations. They often engage in teaching ordinary or lab classes.

Student Community – you are a part of the academic community as well! Although you cannot manage people, you can impact how the University operates. For example, by being involved in the student government or the University senate. You can also propose various initiatives and participate in decision-making related to study programmes. Now that you know how the University is organised, it is time to learn how to address its members.

Spoken Communication – How to Avoid Errors

Properly addressing lecturers and academic staff is extremely important at universities. Using the correct form of address shows respect for the person you are talking to. Regardless of whether it is a conversation in class, an email, or a meeting outside the classroom, you should always follow the rules of linguistic politeness.

Three Notes on University-related Communication

1. Formality

It is assumed that communication at the University is of formal nature. This is due to the hierarchy in academia. Therefore, we should address others officially and use appropriate register and vocabulary, especially when talking to the higher-ups.

2. Hierarchy

Relationships between students and professors are similar to a corporate environment – someone is a boss and someone is just a staff member, someone is a manager and someone is a member of a team project, and so on. There's nothing wrong with that. Therefore, remember that an I-deserve-it attitude can hurt someone, or reduce your chances of getting things done.

3. Titling

Calling a professor “doctor” or a doctor ““professor” is a serious gaff. Before you go to class, it is advisable to check what the lecturers' titles and degrees are. Similarly to writing emails – know who you are writing to, and who your intended audience is. Titles and proper addressing the University staff are a key element of academic culture.

How to Address Faculty Members?

One of the most troublesome issues, especially right at the beginning of your studies (we know it from experience!), are the proper ways to address professors, lecturers, and University officials. In both spoken and written communication you should always address them by their academic title, position, or degree. However, the academic forms of address system can be quite complicated. Should you have any doubts concerning that, use this cheat sheet:

Title, degree, or position	How to address?
Engineer, Master of Engineering	Dear Ms/Mr [Last Name]
Master (MA, MSc)	Dear Ms/Mr [Last Name]
Doctor, Doctor of Engineering	Dear Doctor [Last Name]
Priest Doctor/Sister Doctor	Dear Reverend Doctor/Dear Sister Doctor
Habilitated Doctor	Dear Professor
Priest Habilitated Doctor, Priest Professor/ Sister Habilitated Doctor, Sister Professor	Dear Reverend Professor/ Dear Sister Professor
Professor	Dear Professor
Dean	Dear Dean
Vice-Dean	Dear Vice-Dean
Rector	Dear Rector (ceremonially: Your Excellency)

This system, however, is not always accurate, as it may happen that one person holds several positions within a faculty. If your classes are taught by a Dean or a Vice-Dean and you'd like to send them an email regarding class-related matters, it is best to use their academic degree or academic title rather than their administrative function.

It is worth remembering the rules for abbreviating titles, too. A full stop is used when the abbreviated form does not end with the final letter of the full word (e.g. Professor → Prof., however the title of a Professor is usually not abbreviated at all), while the forms that do end with the final letter are written without any extra punctuation (e.g. Doctor → Dr)

Feminatives

Some female instructors use feminine forms of academic titles etc. in Polish. You will usually find out what is their preferred form when they introduce themselves during the first class or from their email signature. This issue, however, is specific to Polish. In English such titles are gender-neutral so feminine forms do not apply.

How to check someone's title in the USOS?

There are two simple ways to check the title or degree of your lecturer.

Method 1 – search the Directory

1. Log into the USOS and select the *Directory* tab
2. Enter the name and surname of your lecturer in the *People Search* field
3. Check the lecturer's title on their profile page

Method 2 – search via the Schedule

1. Log into the USOS and select the *My USOSweb* tab
2. In the side bar, select *Schedule*
3. Select the class you're interested in, then click on the instructor's name. You'll be taken to the instructor's page, where you can check their title or degree – similarly to the previous method

Now that you know how to properly address someone, you can start writing emails!

Your E-mail is your card

During your time at the university, it will be necessary for you to write e-mail messages to the University staff. Even though this might seem trivial, the overall appearance and content of your message may either help you resolve your problem or contribute to denying your request. For that reason, it is worth knowing how to write e-mails in a simple, correct and elegant way consistent with existing rules.



How to write a good e-mail?

1. **Your e-mail address.** Make sure that you are using an appropriate e-mail address. For matters concerning the University, you have to send messages from an email address with the University domain (@student.uw.edu.pl).
2. **The recipient's e-mail address.** Double check if the recipient's address is correct, otherwise you will be waiting for a reply to a message that has not even reached the addressee.
3. **Title.** The way in which you formulate an e-mail subject may cause the recipient to read it instantly or put it off till later. The title should be concise, to convey the essence of your e-mail. But remember, do not put the whole message in there. Present it briefly, and describe it later in the body of the e-mail.
4. **Opening lines.** Never use *Hi*, because it is considered casual and can signal a lack of respect. Instead, use *Dear Ms/Mr/Mrs* or *Dear Professor/Doctor*.

Caution!

If the recipient has a Master's Degree or is in the process of doing their PhD studies, you can use *Dear Mr/Ms/Mrs. Good Morning* is less official but also sufficient, no matter the time of day. Besides, keep in mind not to use abbreviations.

If you are writing an e-mail to the Student Affairs Office or some general address and you are not sure who is going to receive it, you may use *Dear Sir or Madam* or *To whom it may concern*. After a polite greeting, put a comma and start a new line in lowercase if you are writing in Polish, because it is a continuation of a sentence; in English, use uppercase.

5. **Introduce yourself**, especially if you have never spoken to the recipient.

6. **Content**. Remember to give all the information that might be useful to the recipient to minimize their effort. Nevertheless, make sure not to exaggerate with the details - your professor does not need to know every symptom of your illness when you inform them about your absence.

7. **Ending**. After starting an e-mail with *Dear Mx/Doctor/Professor* finish it with *Sincerely* or *Respectfully*.

Caution!

Some people prefer to use phrases such as *Best regards / Kind regards*. However, they are slightly less formal, and not everyone accepts them. If you do not know this person, it is best to write *Respectfully* or *Sincerely*. Additionally, keep in mind that it is the person higher in the hierarchy that initiates bridging the gap, so only if your recipient decides to be less formal, you may do it as well.

8. **Signature**. After the complimentary close put a comma and then sign your e-mail. Remember to put your full name. Sometimes (e.g. in the e-mails to the Dean's Office) to make things easier, you can also include your student ID number or your study group number. In some cases, it is also good to add the year you study at or the cycle of studies.

9. **Attachments**. If you are sending an attachment via e-mail check if it was added correctly.

10. **Aesthetics and correctness**. Check your e-mail for possible grammatical, spelling or punctuation mistakes. If your message is long and packed with information, divide it into paragraphs not to discourage your recipient with one big block of text.

An exemplary e-mail:

exemplaryprofessor@uw.edu.pl

From



Statistics short test

Dear Professor,

I am a 3rd year Physics student and I attend your statistics class (3rd group, Tuesday at 13:30).

Unfortunately, I missed the last class. Is it possible to take the short test during your office hours? If it is, I would gladly come and write it on Thursday at 13:00.

Sincerely,

Emily Smith

Student ID number: 123456

The e-mail is sent. Some advice what to do next.

1. When you reply to an e-mail, remember to thank for the previous message.
2. If the next replies are sent in the same thread and your interlocutor allows it, you may omit using *Dear Doctor/Professor* in every e-mail.
3. If you have received an e-mail from a University staff member, do not delay the response for too long. It is best to reply within 24 hours. However, do not panic if you happen to break this rule. It is advisable to observe the rule, but most people tend to be rather relaxed about it.

Phrases to start and end an e-mail with

Start with:

- Dear Professor XYZ,
- Dear Doctor XYZ,
- Dear Professors,
- Dear Professor X and Professor Y,
- To whom it may concern (if the recipients are unknown),
- Dear Ms/Mrs/Mr.

End with:

- Respectfully, ... ,
- Sincerely,

Or

- Best regards, ... ,
- Kind regards,

Caution!

If the recipient is a priest use:

- Dear Father XYZ, ... ,
- Father XYZ, ... ,
- Reverend Father, ...(highly formal).

If the recipient is a nun, start your e-mail with:

- Dear Sister XYZ, ... ,
- Dear Reverend Mother, ... (highly formal, for high-ranked).

To finish an e-mail use the standard, previously mentioned closing.

Make sure your application looks good on Head of Studies' desk

Now you have learned how to address the University staff in spoken or e-mail communication. Nevertheless, there might be some situations where it is not enough, and you will be required to write a formal application. In the USOS you will find a word *request* (or *application*) meaning an online application form. We will deal with it briefly in the next part.

Below you will find important rules how to write requests, which are useful also outside university. At the end of the chapter you will find two exemplary applications:

- short, written for simple matters that do not need extensive explanation,
- long, used for major and complicated requests.

Feel free to use both samples to write your application in the future. Should we start then?

Application

It is a type of document that contains a request to the authorities of an institution e.g. a university. Usually, such a request is addressed to a specific person representing the institution. When we make a request, we would like it to be granted. That is why we need to prepare our application properly. A straightforward and simple document allows the recipient to fully understand the matter. It may also speed up the whole process. Moreover, a neat preparation will be a proof that your request matters a lot to you.

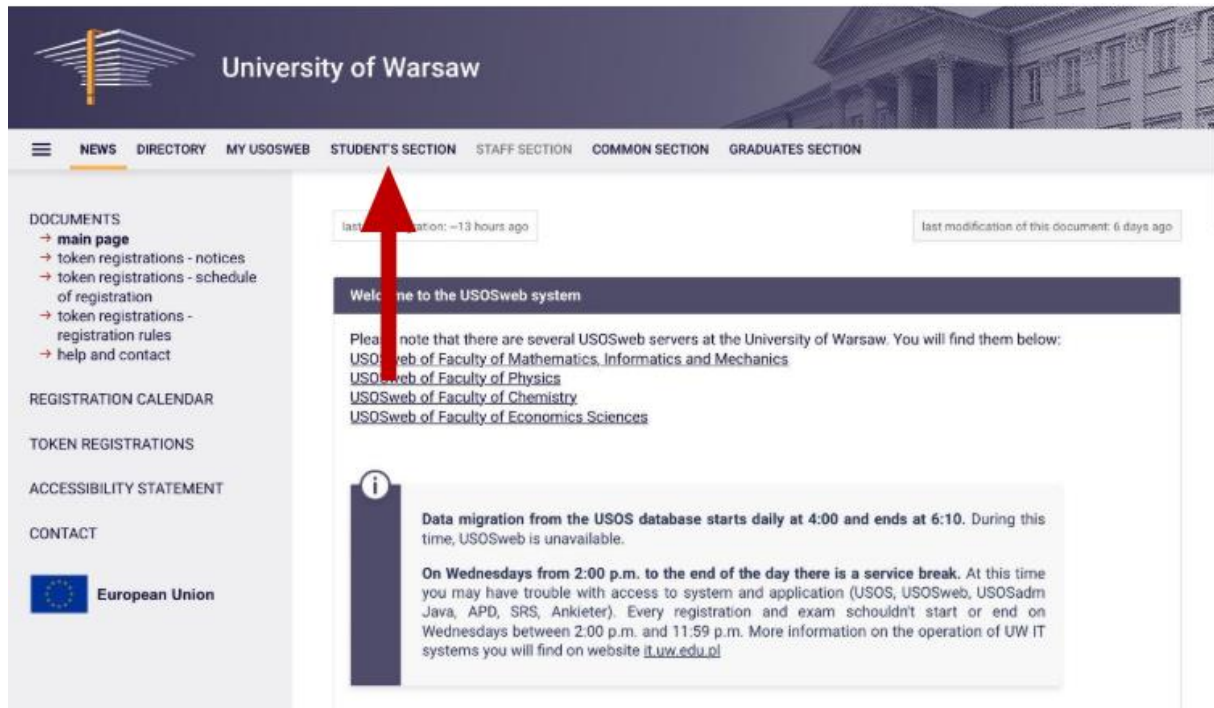
How to prepare a request - 3 simple steps

1. Think about the content and check who you are going to address it to. You can find the information on the website or directly contact the person representing a given institution. If the petition is meant for the University, you can ask the Student Affairs Office in your faculty. Even a flawlessly prepared request will not be approved if it does not reach the correct recipient.

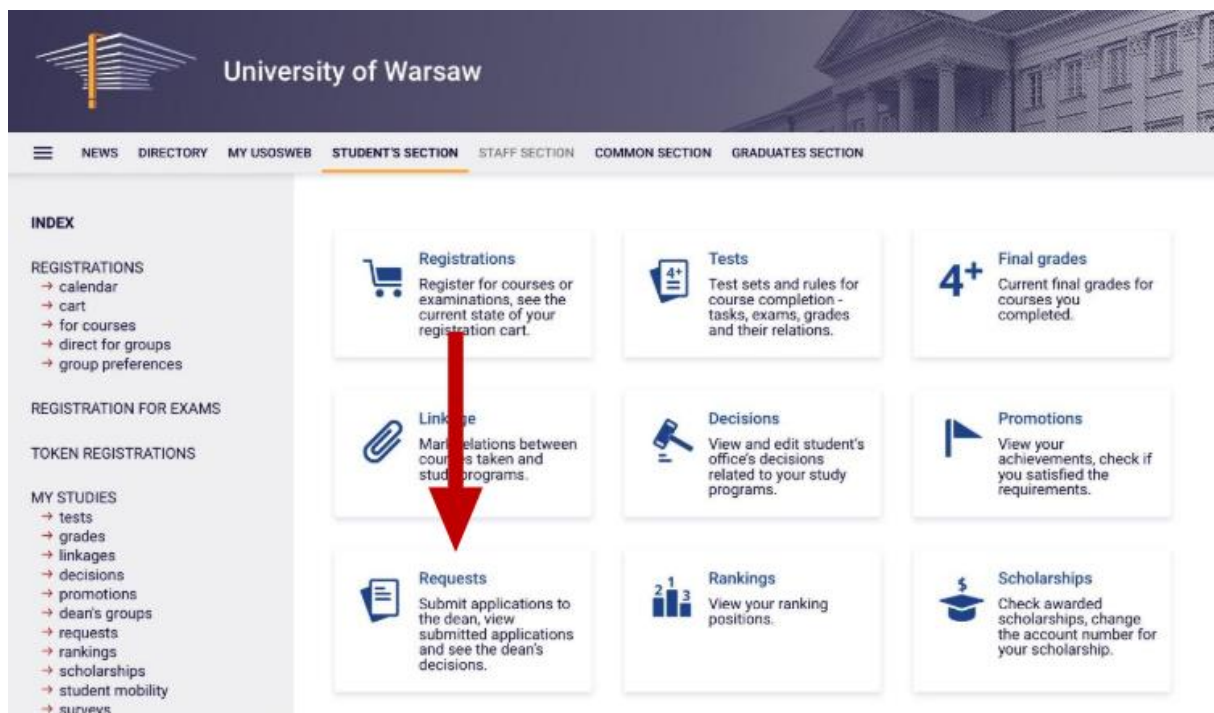
- Make sure to ask about the best way to submit your request. Depending on the answer, prepare one of the following:
 - a hard copy - the paper version is still the most popular for submitting documents. It can be either printed or handwritten.

- a digital version. Good news is that more and more institutions welcome technological progress. At our university, you can submit applications via the USOS. After you made sure that your faculty accepts electronic applications:

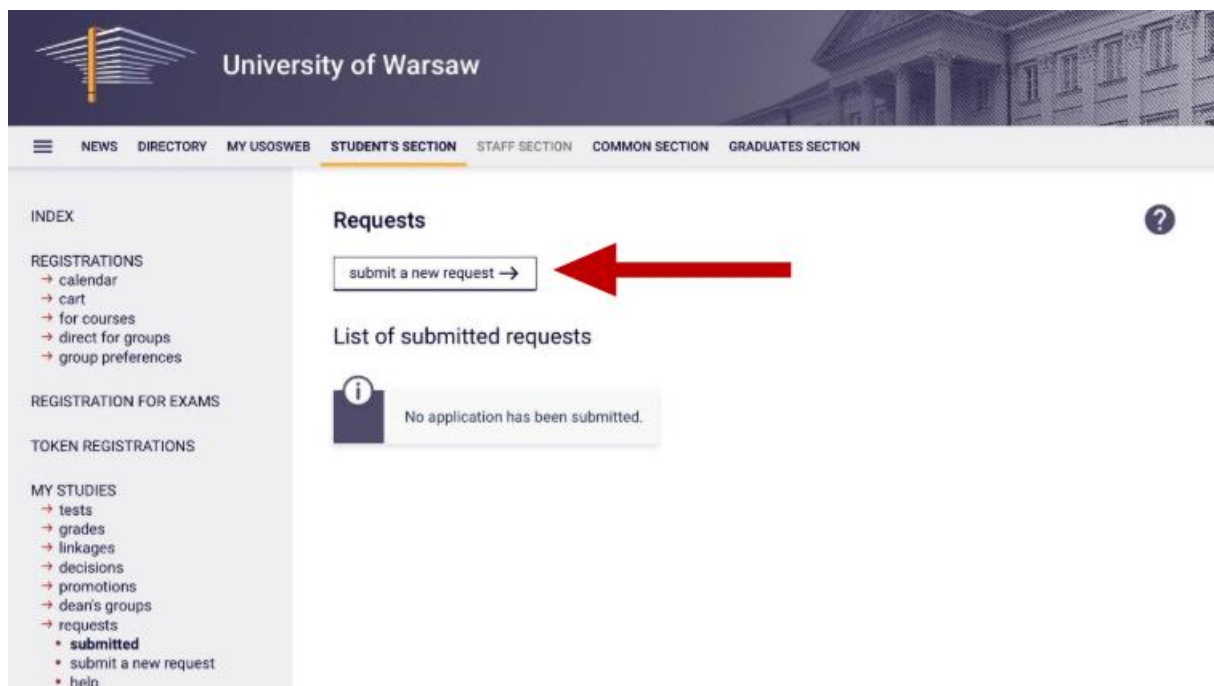
- Log in to the USOS and choose a tab *Student's Section*



- Choose *Requests*

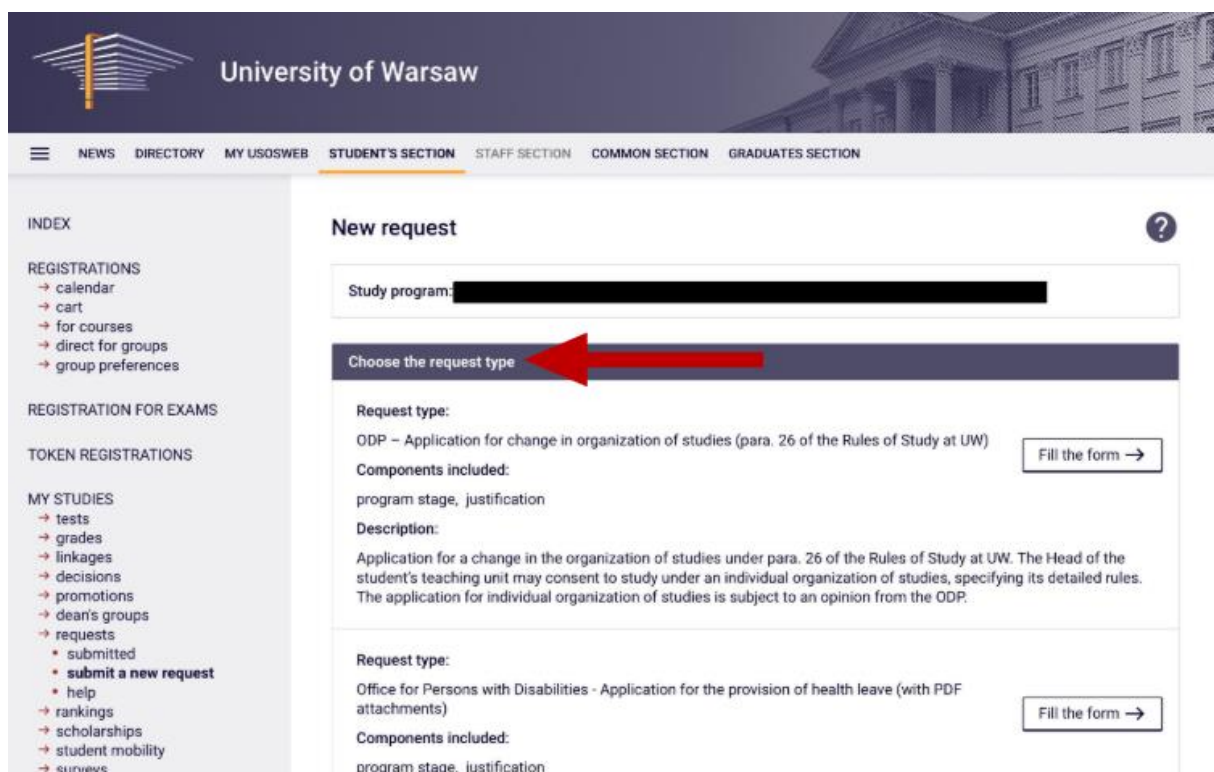


- Click *Submit a new request*. You will see a list of your previously submitted requests below.



The screenshot shows the University of Warsaw website. The header includes the university logo and name. The navigation bar has links for NEWS, DIRECTORY, MY USOSWEB, STUDENT'S SECTION (highlighted), STAFF SECTION, COMMON SECTION, and GRADUATES SECTION. On the left, there is a sidebar menu with categories like INDEX, REGISTRATIONS, REGISTRATION FOR EXAMS, TOKEN REGISTRATIONS, and MY STUDIES. The main content area is titled 'Requests' and contains a button labeled 'submit a new request →' which is highlighted by a red arrow. Below this button is a section titled 'List of submitted requests' which shows a message: 'No application has been submitted.'

- Search through most frequently submitted requests and use the template.



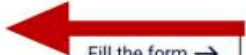
The screenshot shows the 'New request' form on the University of Warsaw website. The header and navigation bar are the same as in the previous screenshot. The sidebar menu is also visible. The main content area is titled 'New request' and contains a form. At the top of the form is a text input field for 'Study program:'. Below this is a button labeled 'Choose the request type' which is highlighted by a red arrow. The form also includes sections for 'Request type:', 'Components included:', and 'Description:'. There are two examples of request types shown, each with a 'Fill the form →' button.

- Do not worry if none of the templates fits your case. At the bottom of the website you will see an option that lets you create your own application form. We also prepared more templates that should help you, which you will find in the next section of this handbook.

Request type:
Other applications (with PDF attachments) 

Components included:
subject, justification

Description:
Any other application without information about course credits and with the possibility of adding attachments in PDF format.

Request type:
Other applications with attached information about course credits (with PDF attachments) 

Components included:
no additional components required

Description:
Any other application with attached information about course credits or another list of courses compiled in the USOSweb system and with the possibility of adding attachments in PDF format.

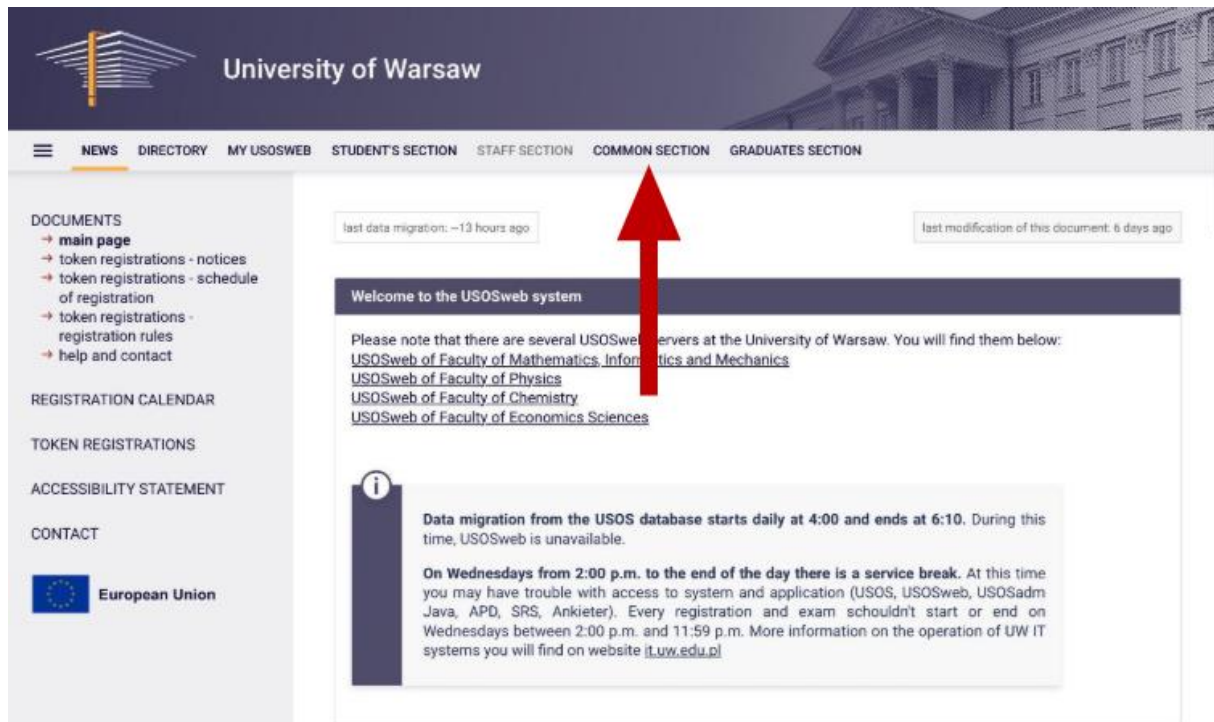
- Bring in or send your application form. If you are to bring a paper version of the document, remember about a handwritten signature! You cannot omit it, it is very important!

Application for financial support

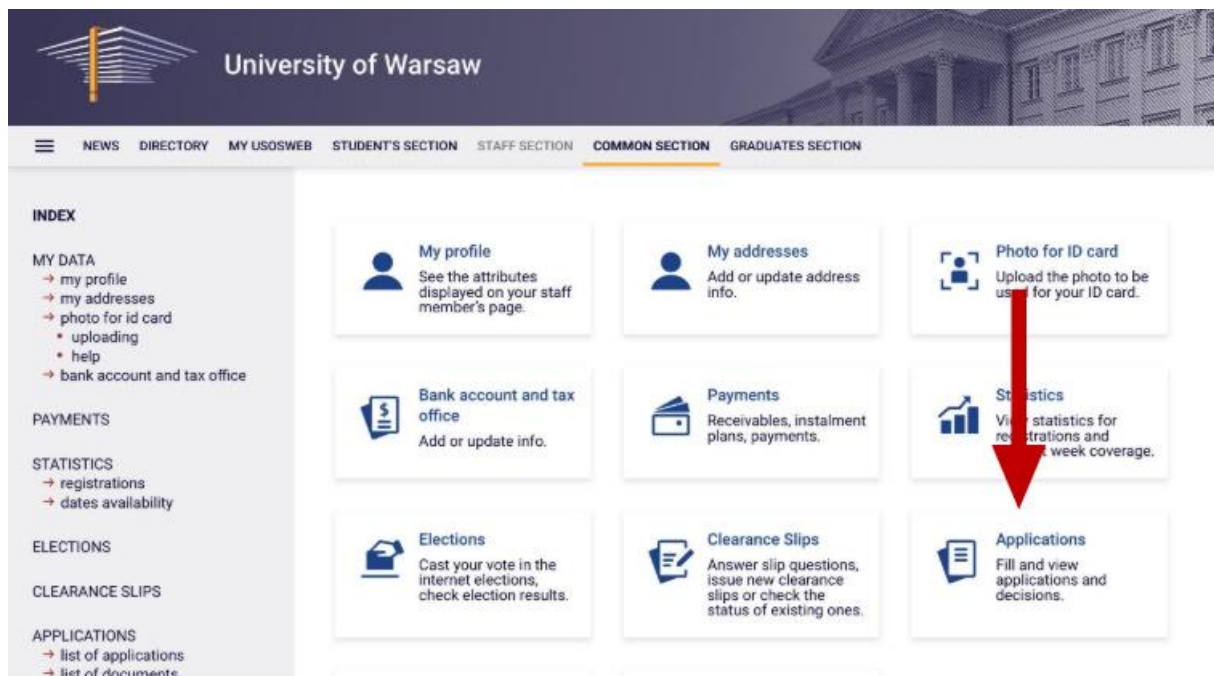
If you are planning to apply for support offered by the Student Welfare and Support Office (Biuro ds. Pomocy Materialnej), for instance to be granted student accommodation or social scholarship, you will certainly encounter the word *application*. It is an online form that needs to be submitted at a certain time determined by the Dean. In that case we have some more useful advice for you! Some blanks that you will need to fill in require answers to open-ended questions. . Believe us, a correctly written and well-thought-out answer can help your application be more likely to be successful.

To find this type of applications:

1. Log into the USOS and choose a tab *Common section*



2. Choose *Applications*



3. Scroll to the bottom of the website and look through the list of applications you can submit.

General rules for writing applications

Your application should be simple and clear, both in content and form. How to do it?

- **Prepare your application in a word processor.** Of course, there are cases when we need to write it by hand. For better readability, we recommend writing your application on a computer.
- **Fit all the content on one A4 page.** The person to whom you are addressing your application will likely receive many of them and will appreciate it when your request is concise.
- **Pay attention to text formatting.** Choose appropriate margins (2.5 cm) and line spacing (1.5). Use a standard font, such as Times New Roman or Arial, in size 12. Remember to align the place, date, and addressee details to the right, and your details to the left. Justify the rest of the text.
- **Save the document in a PDF format.** Whether you send the application as an attachment or print it out, the PDF format ensures that the application retains its planned layout.
- **Remember to keep your document neat.** And we mean that literally 😊. Your application, when submitted in person, should be clean and not crumpled.

Sample application

Below you will see two sample applications. The first one is shorter and adequate for most matters. The second, which is longer, will be useful when your request concerns a more complex matter, for example, you want to apply for funding. Fun fact: the second example is a real application that was submitted to the Rector on behalf of the Koło Naukowe Prostego Języka, a students' club that promotes plain language. Not only did it reach the Rector, but it was also approved by him! Therefore, we can wholeheartedly recommend it as a template to use. Each significant element of the application is marked with a number and explained below. Here are our ready-made solutions. 😊

Short application

Warsaw, 15 October 2024

Anna Nowak
Polish Philology, first year, full-time studies
The Faculty of Polish Studies at the University of Warsaw
Student number 123456

Vice-Dean for Student Affairs
The Faculty of Polish Studies at the University of Warsaw
dr Jan Kowalski

Dear Dean Kowalski,

I kindly request a transfer to Group 1 for the course "Simple Language in Academic Communication" (code: 3003-P1A1BW), taught by prof. dr hab. Maria Wójcik in the current academic year.

The recruitment for mandatory subjects this semester was open until October 13, 2024. Unfortunately, there were no available spots in Group 1 with classes at 8:00 AM, so I registered for Group 2 classes at 1:15 PM. Unfortunately, I have English language classes at that time as part of my language course.

I would be extremely grateful if you would approve my request.

Yours sincerely,
[handwritten signature]

Long application

[place], [date]

[name and surname]

President of the Koło Naukowe Prostego Języka

The Faculty of Polish Studies at the University of Warsaw

His Magnificence

Rector of the University of Warsaw

Prof. dr hab. [name and surname]

Your Magnificence,

Dear Rector,

I am writing to you on behalf of the Koło Naukowe Prostego Języka. This year in May, we plan to organise the third edition of the student-doctoral scientific conference [name of the conference]. **Therefore, we are asking you to finance the rental of a room in the building at [name of the street].**

About the conference

The [conference name] conference has been bringing together linguistics students for almost three years. As young researchers, we want to consider together the role of language in communication. The conference will take place on [date]. The program includes approximately [number] papers by undergraduate and graduate students from across Poland.

Cost

Renting room [room number] at [faculty name] would cost us [amount] PLN.

We need a space where we can accommodate [number] people and serve refreshments. The cost includes renting the room for 6 hours on the following dates:

- ❖ [date], [hours] (1 hour),
- ❖ [date], [hours] (5 hours).

The hourly rate for internal university entities is [amount] PLN/hour (the price list attached).

Justification

Considering the nature of the activities of our club, we believe that the theme of plain language will be central and prominent at the conference. As the University of Warsaw joined the Plain Language Declaration in November 2023, we feel that

the cooperation between students and the university authorities on this issue seems particularly valuable.

Additionally, our conference is nationwide: we will be hosting students from various universities. As we want to represent our Alma Mater proudly, the building at [street name] seems the perfect place to welcome our guests and promote the University of Warsaw.

I would be extremely grateful if you would grant our request.

With kind regards,
[handwritten signature]

1. Place and date

In your application, provide the place and date of the submission. Separate them with a comma. For the date, you can use the customary DD.MM.YYYY format.

2. Your details

- If you apply on your own behalf, use your own personal details: your first name and last name, the field of study, year, mode of study, faculty, and your student number to be consistent with what is provided above.
- If you apply on behalf of a larger group of students, e.g., as a student group, enter them in the following format: the first name and last name of each individual, followed by their position and faculty.

3. Addressee's details

Check carefully to whom you are addressing your request. Academic degrees and titles or the names of the university units may change, so please ensure you provide up-to-date information.

4. Addressing the Addressee

- Start with "Dear Sir/Madam" if you address a specific person, or "Dear [Department Name] Members" if you address a group of people or an entire unit and you do not know who will receive your application. This is the safest and most polite option. After all, you want to win the recipient over.

- Check the table in Chapter 1 for how to address a given university employee if you address a specific person. Choose the one that matches the recipient's title, rank, and/or position.
- Use a comma after the form of address and start the first paragraph with a lowercase letter. You already know this rule from the section on emails.

5. Purpose

- Before you start writing, answer the following questions: *What am I asking for? Why do I need it?* State the purpose of the application/request at the beginning: this will help the recipient understand the matter quickly. You can even bold your request, as we did in our example.
- It is a good idea to use one of the official phrases to express your request. We suggest a few solutions that you can use in the first and last paragraphs:

Phrases expressing a request	Closing phrases for applications
<i>I hereby respectfully request...</i>	<i>I kindly ask that my request be approved</i>
<i>I respectfully ask for consent...</i>	<i>I kindly ask for a favourable decision in my case</i>
<i>I respectfully request approval...</i>	<i>I would be extremely grateful if my request were granted</i>

6. Body of the application

- The length of the application and the number of paragraphs depend on the nature of your case. The application submitted by our students' club is lengthy, but yours does not have to be. What matters most is that all the necessary information is provided. And remember – the simpler, the better.
- Follow the rule: one paragraph = one idea. Avoid presenting the text as a single dense block. Divide it into smaller thematic sections.
- Add subheadings, i.e. headings that indicate the subject of each paragraph (here: *About the conference, Costs, Justification*). This will make the application easier to navigate and give the document a lighter, more reader-friendly structure.
- Highlight the most important information – this is always a good idea.
- Refer to facts and specific details. For example, if you request a remission of fees for repeating a course, include the exact amount according to the university's fee table and the course code from USOS, as shown in our example.

7. Justification

This is a particularly important section in which you can explain in greater detail why the matter is important to you. Remember that there is a person on the other side who wants to help you, but must be given a chance to understand your situation and, in some cases, a formal basis for granting your request. Therefore, the justification should be sufficiently detailed, meaning that it contains enough arguments, but not excessively detailed, meaning that it should concern only the subject of the application. If you submit an application on behalf of a students' club, it is worth explaining what value your initiative will bring to the entire university.

8. Closing and signature

- At the end of the document, you may use one of the suggested phrases listed in the table *Closing phrases for applications*.
- Add a polite closing formula from the table *Sign-offs*.
- Remember to include a handwritten signature at the end of the application. Of course, this rule does not apply if you submit the application via USOS.

Materials you may find useful

We hope that this guide will help you communicate more effectively both at university and beyond. However, from our own experience, we know that many additional communicative challenges that we have not addressed here will arise along the way.

We have prepared a list of places and tools that will help you deepen your knowledge of linguistic politeness, correctness, and plain language. We encourage you to share these recommendations with anyone who wants to communicate more efficiently in English.

For everyone

- **Oxford English Dictionary (OED)**
A comprehensive dictionary where you can check detailed definitions, etymology, usage examples and historical quotations.
- **Language Advice and Usage**
If you have doubts about grammatical correctness, stylistic appropriateness, or politeness in English, you can consult professional language resources:
Cambridge Dictionary - Grammar section
Oxford University Press - Grammar and usage articles
- **Synonyms - Thesaurus.com**
Writing a long paper and your text editor keeps underlining repeated words? An open synonym dictionary will solve this problem 😊
- **APA - Inclusive Language Guideliness**
Now for something more serious – everyone deserves respect, including respect expressed through language. This guide explains, among other things, how to address people of different orientations or religious affiliations.

For writers

- **Grammarly**
A popular writing assistant that checks grammar, spelling, punctuation, and style.
- **LanguageTool**
A free tool that checks texts in many foreign languages. We have a feeling it will be useful during language classes 😊

For those who want to learn more

- **Plain English Campaign**
You already know what plain language is and why it is worth using. Familiarise yourself with the plain language standard, developed jointly by representatives of several academic centres. If effective communication is important to you, these guidelines may also prove useful in your own work.