**Contacting your tutor for support**

**Here are four very short sample emails you can use, followed by some ideas if you want to write more:**

**Contacting your tutor for support**

If you’re going through a tough time, for whatever reason, it can be surprisingly hard to reach out for help and support, especially if you have to articulate what’s happening in an email rather than being able to have a conversation. Expressing complex things in writing is hard, and at Cambridge we are used to our writing being marked and judged; we may worry that we’re not getting the ‘tone’ right, or haven’t found exactly the right words, sometimes to the extent that we put off writing the email at all, or can’t bring ourselves to click ‘send’.

If this sounds familiar, you’re not alone. The welfare team and JCR welfare officers have put together some templates that you can use, which are on the next page. Feel free to copy and paste however much is useful, changing whatever needs to be changed to fit your situation. The tutors all know that these templates are being provided, and why. They are OK with you using them.

Meanwhile…

**Tips for emailing your tutor**

* Type the main point first. What is it that you most need to communicate?
* You don’t have to put all the detail in the email.
* If you’re not sure that you’ve explained things clearly, say that. Hopefully the email you are writing is the means to have a conversation when you can express things more easily (even if that’s via video call).
* Then afterwards fill in the start and end of the message.
* Remember, if you’re in distress, your tutor will not mind if you spell their name wrong, or haven’t managed a full sentence.
* The words you use may matter less than you think. Tutors would much rather receive an email that’s not perfect than find out later that you needed support and didn’t get it.

**It helps if you get to know your tutor.**

* They play a vital role in supporting you through your time in Cambridge.
* They are able to access additional support for you when you need it most.
* Building a relationship of trust with your tutor when you are fine makes it easier to reach out to them if you get into difficulty.

**It’s OK to ask for help.**

* If you need to contact your tutor to ask for help, there is absolutely no shame in that. Asking for help when we need it is a way of exercising agency and starting to get some control back.
* Your tutor will want to help you – they’re not disappointed in you.
* It’s worth flagging up an issue sooner rather than later – getting support early on can stop things spiralling out of control.
* …but if you’re worried you’ve left it too late, it’s still worth getting in touch.

**Contacting your tutor – some templates you are welcome to use**

Dear Dr …………
Please could we meet [fairly urgently]?
Thanks and best wishes
[name]

Dear Dr ……………
I’m struggling with my work at the moment and I’m worried about falling behind. Can we meet?
Thanks and best wishes
[name]

Dear Dr …………
I’m struggling with my mental health and I think I might need some counselling or other support,
but the UCS has a really long waiting list. Can the College help?
Thanks and best wishes
[name]

Dear Dr …………
There’s a situation that I need to talk to you about. Please can we meet [fairly urgently]?
Thanks and best wishes
[name]

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| --- | --- |
| **Dear …**  | *If you’re not sure how to address your tutor, title and surname is always OK.*  |
| **I’m writing to you because….** …I am struggling a bit with my mental health… …I have been feeling down… …I have been feeling anxious… …I am finding it hard to get motivated… …I have a medical issue… **…and I think I may need…** …some support, but I’m not sure what. …counselling. …a bit of leeway with supervision work. …to think about intermitting. …to have special arrangements for my exam(s).  | *It’s OK to get straight to the point. These are some of the things for which students most commonly seek support, and for which support is readily available* *You might use this section if a feeling you have has been growing and starting to affect your wellbeing to the extent that you want some support.*  |
| **There is no easy way to say this, but….** …something has happened… …I’m not sure who to tell… …I’m really struggling… …I have harmed myself… …and I don’t know what to do. …and I don’t feel safe. …and I need to talk to someone urgently. …but I am safe now.  | *You might use this section if your situation has suddenly deteriorated, or if it is more of a crisis than an ongoing situation. You can include details of what has happened, or save that for when you are able to have a conversation.* *NB your tutor may not pick up an email straight away. So if you need urgent help, use the welfare flowchart to find help 24/7. In an emergency, don’t hesitate to ask for help, even if that means dialling 999.* *Do say whether or not you are safe at the moment.*  |
| **Please…** …can you phone me on [number]?…can we meet [on Teams]? …could I be referred for [counselling etc]? …could you suggest some ways to….? …could you contact my DOS to explain …?  | *Say what you would like to happen next, eg for your tutor to reply, or call you, or refer you for support, etc.*  |
| **I hope you are keeping safe and well. Best wishes**, [name]  | *You don’t have to include ‘pleasantries’, but if you’re not sure how to sign off this suggestion is fine. Make sure you include your name, and ideally send the email using your @cam address so your tutor can easily identify you, especially if you have a common name.*  |