

## **Courtesy – Let's avoid informality**

When we write a letter, or an email, or any written communication to a colleague for a client we need to be mindful that such communication could be tendered at some time as evidence in proceedings.

It is best for us to avoid familiarity and informality. For instance, unless a colleague invites us to use his or her given name, we should continue to use salutations such as "Dear Colleague" or "Dear Mr X" or "Dear Miss Y", until invited by our colleague to address them by their given name. Avoid references to personal issues or expressing a personal opinion. Emails have aided in getting our clients concerns across quicker but this should not be seen to mean that a less formal approach can be adopted. Statements about going to the pub, or "thanking god it is Friday" should be reserved for less formal communications.

When we write a letter or send an email addressed to any person (whether client, colleague or a third person) it should be courteous and avoid offensive language. Being too familiar or informal can be a disservice to the client and may lead our client to question whether we are looking after his or her best interests.

When dealing with colleagues, we must take all reasonable care to maintain the integrity and reputation of the profession by ensuring that our communications, whether they are written or oral, are courteous.

Before sending the letter or email think about what a court or your client may think if that document is tendered in evidence.

For further information on these issues go to the [Ethics Centre website](#) and look under the topic Communications and Courtesy.

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