OnCourse Texting Guidelines

Please keep the following information in mind when using the texting feature. Text messages in OnCourse are limited to 120 characters. Student phone numbers are imported from the SIS. The cell number may not be correct, depending on how frequently the student has updated their cell in BuckeyeLink. Some students may add their parents’ cell number or have changed numbers once attending college. Considering this:

- Do send messages like: “Please check your BuckeyeMail for an important message about [topic] from [office/unit/department].”
- Do keep your messages FERPA, HIPAA, and GLBA-friendly: i.e. “Checking in with you about a to-do item” versus “Checking in with you about your financial hold”, or “Please check your BuckeyeMail for an urgent message from your advisor” versus “Please schedule an appointment with your advisor about your Academic Probation status”
- Do text about urgent messages, brief updates, or appointment reminders rather than general check-ins and non-urgent messages
- Coordinate text messages with other offices, like Success Services, Tutoring, or Advising, to keep from overwhelming students with multiple texts on the same topic from different offices. This will reduce the number of students who opt out of texting.
- If a student requests to be removed from your list, please honor their wish. Keep a list of students who you will not text and remove them from your text lists.
- Do remember, texts and emails sent in OnCourse are part of the student’s academic record. If a student sends a message that should not be part of their academic record, such as messages that violate HIPAA or GLBA (i.e. “I am in the hospital”), please submit a tech ticket so we can remove that message.
- If a student responds to your text, you will be notified by receiving a copy of their text in your Outlook. Please respond to these by logging into OnCourse and replying within the Conversations page; responding from Outlook with switch the conversation from text to email which may confuse the student.
More information about texting:

Text messages are sent directly to students from OnCourse using the **Send A Message** dialogue. There are several different ways to access this feature. One way is to navigate to a student’s profile page and select **Message Student**.
160 characters are allowed in SMS messages. Any valid Unicode characters are allowed, including emoji (so be careful about your punctuation in order to avoid sending an accidental emoji!). In order for the student to receive the text messages, they must have a valid mobile/cell phone number associated with their profile.

Sent and received SMS/text messages are shown on the My Conversations page.

Automated Text Message Reminder
These are the reminders that can go out the day of a scheduled appointment and for some appointment notifications and queue notifications, among other potential reminders. This number is always the OnCourse short code, 915-52.
Text Message Using Short Code (without Dedicated Number)

If a text is sent to more than 100 students simultaneously, it will come from the short code. Messages sent from the short code cannot receive text message replies.

When students reply a message sent from a short code, they also receive a message explaining that text message replies sent to this number are undeliverable. You can explain this in the original SMS to prevent students replying to the short code.
Quick Summary of Text Message Functionality

A text message can come from a randomly generated 10 digit number (e.g. 205-619-9669)
- Occurs when a staff person messages under 100 students
- Students can reply for up to 90 days (if there’s any response activity in the text chain, the 90 day clock resets)
- Student replies go to staff persons’ conversations tab in Navigate, and a notification email is sent to the institution email account
- Staff can only reply to a student response through Navigate
- Students cannot opt-out

A text message can also come from a short code number (e.g. 915-52)
- Occurs when a staff person texts more than 100 students at time
- Also occurs when a student receives an automated text message reminder for an appointment
- Students cannot respond, and if they do, they’ll get a message saying it was not received
- Students can opt-out:
  - If a student opts-out, they no longer receive text messages from Navigate for only those sent through short codes (this includes automated appointment reminders – they will be sent as an email)
  - Staff can view students who have opted out of short code text messages by accessing the relevant report