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OK

That's driving me up the wall! Academics' pet peeves

The scholarly calling may be all about intellectual pursuits, but university life is not without its petty irritations. A dozen academics describe the daily distractions that annoy them most

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Reply all? Please don't

It's Monday morning, and you arrive in the office in a high fever after another parking nightmare. The photocopier is broken, so instead of preparing handouts for your 10am class, you decide to make a head start on the thousand or so emails in your inbox.

The faculty is going through a restructure (yes, another one!) and the interim dean has called for a new slogan: something bold and "cutting edge". You need coffee. Curiously, your mug is missing, so you search out the miscellaneous cup that no one uses: the one with the chipped handle and a painted rose. You sit down at your desk.

An hour later, you've almost cleared your emails when a new notification arrives. The subject is: "re: The Future Begins Now!" Cathy, your colleague in design, has pitched her slogan to the dean and accidentally copied in the entire faculty. It's an easy mistake, you think. You like Cathy. She



Source: Getty

was probably in a rush. You reason that it's the end of semester and everyone needs a break. Especially Cathy. You delete the email.

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But here's what happens next. Karen, the payroll officer, replies: "Hi Cathy, I think you included me by mistake." Fiona, also from HR, confirms: "And me." A few minutes pass. Stefan, a PhD in women's studies, takes the opportunity to show off his allegiance to the cause. He's a feminist, you know. He replies: "#metoo". You take a break from email.

In the kitchen, you take some time to look for your mug. You make a mental note to ask your colleague, Jim, if he's seen it. You don't trust Jim. He stole your third-year capstone module and reuses your lecture recordings. He's also married to your boss.

When you return to your desk, Professor X, a supremely intelligent man with no idea how the internet works, has replied: "Please unsubscribe me from this list." You close your eyes and think of a happy place. You picture yourself there, in the bottle shop.

Your daydream is interrupted by the noise of a chainsaw. Two men from facilities management are cutting down the tree outside your window. One of them waves. You have seven new emails. You delete them all. Just when you think it's over, Cathy responds: "Please disregard my previous e-mail." Another email immediately follows: "Cathy has retracted the email 're: The Future Begins Now!'"

You close the lid on your laptop. Jim appears in his Lycra bodysuit.

"Good morning!" he says smugly. "Coffee?"

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