Communication between professors and students in online education
93% of communication is not based on words.

7% corresponds to verbal communication

93% corresponds to nonverbal communication

- Tone of voice: 38%
- Body language: 55%

- Since the visual element is not present, communication lacks the elements that are important for the receiver for understanding what is being communicated.
- This means that in distance learning (or any other type of guided communication), choosing the right words is crucial for understanding the message that is being sent.

Communication in the virtual setting

In a virtual learning setting communication between professors and students has very particular characteristics that require thoughtfulness from the people who participate in said process.

Communication does not take place at the same physical space nor at the same time.

The visual element is not present (nonverbal communication).

This means we do not have the same elements for interpreting the messages being transmitted.

Communication guided by technology lacks the information gestures add, and thus requires more carefulness when choosing words. Based on this, written communication, regarding the virtual faculty, requires good skills.
Sanz (2006) mentions the following characteristics as requirements that every faculty member should have when communicating with students:

- Appropriate for the situation.
- The content should be coherent.
- Should be clear and use the right language.
- Should have a certain formality, considering that it takes place in a professional and academic setting.

**Mistakes that are present:**

- Telegraphic style speech.
- Disorganized content.
- Frequent grammar mistakes.
- Often in discussion forums the contributions made by the faculty seem to be not very precise and lack content.
Recommendations for an appropriate communication in distance learning

✓ Written communication in an online course (in forums, emails...) should be considered as a teaching method.
✓ In this sense Sanz (2006) states that “the speech of the faculty gives a glimpse of their professional attitudes.”
✓ Take into consideration that the professor becomes a role model for the students.
✓ According to the author previously mentioned, the messages sent by the faculty become guides and models for students, showing them what is expected of communication in an academic context. If the professor uses a cordial and respectful tone, chances are students will do so as well.
Recommendations for an appropriate communication in distance learning

• Formality and neutrality should be present in every communication from the faculty.

• For discussion forums the author recommends the professor participates as another member of the group; they can use a less formal tone, but is essential they make sure the message is clear.

• In distance learning it is possible to have students from different areas and of different nationalities. Because of this, the faculty should refrain from using regionalisms or popular phrases that may be misinterpreted or lack meaning for certain students.
Recommendations for an appropriate communication in distance learning

- If they are participating in a debate it is essential to do the following:
  - Keep an impartial and neutral tone.
  - Give clear instructions.
  - It is important to close with well-structured conclusions and arguments about the main ideas.
  - Be aware of the length of the text to get more students in the group to read it.
Lastly and as a conclusion we directly quote the author

- “The communication style used with students needs to reflect a respectful, cordial and cooperative relationship. There’s no need to use language that is too complex or formal, that distances us from students, but it is not appropriate to use a tone that is too informal and may seem less professional. Also, informal language does not guarantee comprehension, because it may include incomplete phrases, double meanings, metaphorical use, irony. Without a doubt, these resources, so appropriate for personal or informal relationships, specially when spoken, make cause misunderstandings in a moderately formal relationship in written communication” (Sanz, 2006, page 11).