



# Email Excuses and Their Acceptability by Hungarian University Students

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**Abstract.** The main aim of the paper is to investigate student excuses in emails written by Hungarian university students to their instructor, as well as to examine students' perceptions of the acceptability of these excuses. First, the analysis of a corpus of student emails ( $n = 74$ ) shows that students make excuses most frequently because they would like to request the extension of deadlines for their assignments. What is more, the most common excuses students send to the instructor in email are related to technical problems (computer, internet) and to their health (illnesses). Furthermore, data provided by Hungarian university students ( $n = 83$ ) on the acceptability of excuses indicate that students find family-, health- or technology-related excuses acceptable, whereas they believe that not understanding the assignment, being forgetful, and considering the task boring or unchallenging are rather inadequate excuses to make when missing a deadline. Finally, the analysis of the interview data provides an insight into some of the factors, i.e. control, timing, and proof, that influence the perceptions of participants ( $n = 53$ ) regarding excuses in student emails.

**Keywords:** student excuses, emails, acceptability

## 1. Introduction

Various disciplines, such as psychology, philosophy, and linguistics, have studied the ways of how and why people make excuses. While philosophy discusses how to differentiate excuses from similar terms, such as justifications (Austin 1956) or exemptions (Boult 2019), as well as elaborates on the question of responsibility (Van Loon 2023), psychology attempts to describe the process of excuse making and the factors that influence what decisions are made during this procedure (Snyder and Higgins 1988a). When making excuses, the excuse giver has to take into consideration why not to fulfil a previous personal or social engagement

and then decide whether they want to communicate the real reason to the person they make the excuse to or they want to withhold it from them. They can make this decision based on whether the causes are internal/external, controllable/uncontrollable, and intentional/unintentional, and on the basis of the anticipated consequences (Weiner et al. 1987). Another important factor that might influence whether the real reason behind an excuse is communicated is people's positive self-image that they want to preserve. At the same time, excuse givers can decide whether to provide anticipatory excuses, i.e. before the completion of the promised action is due, or retrospective excuses, i.e. after they have failed to fulfil the engagement (Snyder and Higgins 1988b). The need for the linguistic analysis of excuses was first suggested by Austin (1956), who urged researchers to investigate how they were phrased. Further linguistic analyses of excuses include their examination from a pragmatic point of view (Van Dijk 1977), as face-threatening acts (Brown and Levinson 1987) or defensive utterances (Benoit 2015) for image repair (Stein and Ostrowsky 2016).

In general, excuses are the reasons, explanations, or justifications provided by someone who has not fulfilled an existing or pre-arranged personal or social obligation (Austin 1956, Weiner et al. 1987, Liptak 2008). Failure to comply with certain requirements can occur in any context, being extensively prevalent in academic settings, particularly in student–instructor email communication. In such cases, whenever students feel that they did not or could not meet the particular requirements of a course or a class, they can send an email message to the instructor to account for their infractions (Stein and Ostrowsky 2016) that, in turn, can mitigate the feeling of responsibility and repair their image in front of the instructors (Brown and Levinson 1987, Pinto 2019). The theory behind analysing such discourses infers that students try to change the professors' attitudes with the email excuses to avoid criticism or suspicion that would arise due to their (lack of) action (Benoit 2015). Considering and in line with these theoretical underpinnings, the main aim of the current study is to examine the excuses in student-initiated emails that Hungarian university students sent to one of their instructors, i.e. the author of the paper. What is more, the investigation attempts to analyse students' perceptions of the most frequent excuse types that appear in student emails.

## **2. Literature review**

### **2.1. Student excuses**

Generally, excuses can be made in several different situations, but investigating them in an academic context are particularly valuable since understanding why students make excuses and how they make them can improve students' academic

integrity (Denisova-Schmidt et al. 2019) as well as the relationship between the students and their instructors (Martin et al. 2011). As far as student–instructor relationships at universities are concerned, one of the most demanding situations university instructors have to face is when they encounter student excuses as, on the one hand, they can disrupt a well-organized and pre-planned schedule of an academic semester by, for example, students not completing their assignments in time (Abernethy and Padgett 2010, Song 2013, Stein and Ostrowsky 2016). On the other hand, student excuses burden instructors with the demanding task of deciding whether the reasons behind the excuses are legitimate, thus acceptable without any further negative consequences, or fraudulent, hence unacceptable, whereby students can be held responsible for missing a deadline (Caron et al. 1992, Carmichael and Krueger 2014).

Studies investigating student excuses can focus on several aspects and variables that affect students' excuse-making processes and strategies. To start with, some researchers attempt to examine the specific situations in an academic context when students use excuses. Such situations most frequently include deadline extension requests to have more time to complete assignments (Ferrari et al. 1998, Stein and Ostrowsky 2016), missing the submission deadline of assignments (Caron et al. 1992, Duran et al. 2005, Carmichael and Krueger 2014), the postponement or retaking of exams, quizzes, or presentations (Abernethy and Padgett 2010, Martin et al. 2011), and absences from classes (Keith et al. 2005, Song 2013, Stein and Ostrowsky 2016, Ewald 2016).

Furthermore, studies are often conducted to determine to what extent student excuses are truthful. Most of these investigations found that 65-90% of university students had used fraudulent excuses for various reasons, in most cases in order to be able to have more time to complete an assignment (Caron et al. 1992, Carmichael and Krueger 2014, Curry 2023, Ferrari et al. 1998). At the same time, the results also show that, with the exception of reporting someone's, i.e. a grandparent's or a friend's, death, the same type of fraudulent and legitimate excuses, for example, not understanding the assignment, occur with similar frequencies (Caron et al. 1992). Another important finding of these studies is that differences in students' character traits, for example, whether they are procrastinators or not, combined with specific academic settings contribute differently to the frequency of fraudulent excuses, and the same type of excuse can be legitimate in one setting but fraudulent in another (Ferrari et al. 1998). What is more, the analysis shows that students are likely to give fraudulent excuses even when the assignments they are completing are minor ones that do not contribute to receiving their final grades to a great extent (Carmichael and Krueger 2014).

Finally, the frequency of excuse types is also analysed, regardless whether the excuses given were legitimate or fraudulent. A summary of several such investigations can be seen in *Table 1*, compiled by the author of the present

study, providing an overview of which excuses are used the most and the least frequently by undergraduate university students.

**Table 1.** *A summary of studies on the frequency of excuse types*

<b>Authors</b>	<b>Participants, data collection</b>	<b>Rank order of excuse types (from the most to the least frequent ones)</b>
Caron et al. 1992	n = 261 questionnaire	illness family emergency not understanding the assignment alarm failed/overslept left assignment at dorm out of town issues with technology (computer) someone (grandparent/friend) died
Ferrari et al. 1998	n = 546 questionnaire	illness not understanding the assignment alarm failed/overslept family emergency left assignment in dorm out of town issues with technology (computer) someone (grandparent/friend) died
Liptak 2008	n = 56 student emails	health-related issues death in the family being busy
Song 2013	n = 100 questionnaire	illness issues with technology (computer) family issues transportation problems academic meetings (supervisor/advisor) employment-related issues other school activity
Carmichael and Krueger 2014	n = 319 questionnaire	family emergency difficulty with the assignment illness issues with technology (computer)
Ewald 2016	n = 205 student emails	medical issues personal issues professional issues
Pinto 2019	n = 200 student emails	medical issues personal issues professional issues unspecified

<b>Authors</b>	<b>Participants, data collection</b>	<b>Rank order of excuse types (from the most to the least frequent ones)</b>
Curry 2023	n = 153 questionnaire	various issues (busy/work/other) illness family emergency issues with technology (computer) not understanding the assignment
Che Ku Kassim and Sallem 2023	n = 346 questionnaire	not understanding the assignment illness family emergency issues with technology (computer) alarm failed/overslept out of town/country

**2.2. Student emails**

When investigating student excuses, the analysis of student emails appears to be the best approach to do so for several reasons. First of all, email communication has become the most frequently used as well as the most preferred way of interaction between university students and their instructors. The results of a survey (Batista et al. 2021) involving Portuguese university students and university instructors show that among the different communication technologies that students and teachers use to communicate, emails are considered to be the easiest, one of the most useful and most commonly used means in student–professor interactions at university. As for the popularity of emails, a study (Bingham et al. 2022) on students’ preferences for office hours found that students contact their instructors most frequently in emails and second most frequently by talking to them after the class as opposed to meeting them in the office during their office hours or by appointment or contacting them online in other ways such as chats or instant messages.

Another reason for why emails are suitable for the investigation of excuses is that giving excuses seems to be one of the most frequent topics of student–teacher email communication. Although the topics of student-initiated emails vary from asking instructors for clarification as far as the content or the material of the course is concerned or asking for the instructor’s help, advice, and feedback on assignments to making requests and apologizing (Bloch 2002, Myers et al. 2002, Biesenbach-Lucas 2005, O’Neill and Colley 2006, Sheer and Fung 2007, Bingham et al. 2022, Chen et al. 2022, Balogh 2023), the main reasons why students contact their professors in email appear to be giving excuses (Duran et al. 2005, Ewald 2016, Pinto 2019). The communication style (Tratnik et al. 2024) as well as the request strategies (Dombi 2019, Balman and Lee 2020, AlAfnan and Cruz-Rudio 2023) students use in their emails have been analysed to a considerable extent; however, research still needs to be conducted on students’ excuse-making strategies and processes in emails (Stein and Ostrowsky 2016, Pinto 2019).

In line with the need for further research, the analysis of emails for excuses provides naturally-occurring data, as opposed to students' self-reports on their excuse-giving behaviour (for more detail, see references to the questionnaire studies in *Table 1*) or their reactions with excuses to hypothetical situations (see, for example, Martin et al. 2011). Authentic, student-initiated emails offer the opportunity for researchers to investigate not only the real-life, academic contexts in which students generally give excuses but also their structure (Liptak 2008) as well as their content in terms of rhetorical and image restoration strategies (Stein and Ostrowsky 2016, Pinto 2019). As for their structure, excuse emails ( $n = 56$ ) were found to be constructed as follows (Liptak 2008): starting with some forms of salutations, followed by explaining events and offering excuses or, in the reverse order, giving excuses before mentioning the situational context, and, lastly, ending with arrangements for remedy and/or appreciation to the acceptance of the excuse. Regarding rhetorical structure, students employ seven main strategies in their emails ( $n = 324$ ) to repair their images with the instructors (Stein and Ostrowsky 2016). Following Benoit's typology of image repair (2015), the two most frequently used strategies are those of accident and defeasibility. Besides, students employ the strategies of bolstering, corrective action, mortification, shifting blame, and transcendence (Stein and Ostrowsky 2016).

Lastly, studies show that students are more likely to use emails for making excuses than other forms of, for example, face-to-face, communication (Bloch 2002, Duran et al. 2005, Hancock et al. 2010, Carmichael and Krueger 2014, Pinto 2019). An experiment on which form of communication medium stimulates deception more (Hancock et al. 2010) found that participants could deceive each other to a considerable extent when they interacted with the help of online messages. As far as students' excuse-making behaviour is concerned, although some of them might prefer to offer their excuses to their instructors in a face-to-face, thus more personal type of interaction (Carmichael and Krueger 2014), students generally choose sending excuses in emails (Pinto 2019). As emails provide an easy way for students to make excuses and deliver them to their instructors, student emails abound with excuses (Pinto 2019), enabling researchers to investigate them in detail.

### **2.3. Perception of student excuses**

Regarding students' excuse-making strategies and behaviour, several studies have attempted to investigate how both students and instructors perceive them, including such issues as their beliefs about the acceptability and the effectiveness of the given excuses. Students report that not more than a quarter of their instructors has ever required them to provide evidence to ascertain that their excuses are legitimate (Caron et al. 1992). According to most students' experience, instructors generally accept their excuses without any further proof or investigation into the

matter (Che Ku Kassim and Sallem 2023), particularly when they send them in emails (Carmichael and Krueger 2014, Curry 2023). Students also believe that family emergencies and illnesses are the most likely excuses to be accepted by instructors (Keith et al. 2005, Song 2013, Curry 2023). As for family emergencies, students perceive the issues related to family to be too personal, thus too sensitive or intrusive for instructors to ask students for proof (Caron et al. 1992, Curry 2023), while in the case of illnesses, students consider them as more relatable, thus more convincing and acceptable (Song 2013). What is more, Carmichael and Krueger (2014) found that students' excuse-making behaviour correlates positively with their belief that they do not deceive their instructors even when the excuses they offer are fraudulent. Similarly, fraudulent excuse making is evaluated more positively by those students who themselves had provided instructors with such excuses (Curry 2023).

From the instructors' perspective, the most unacceptable student excuses are related to situations where students miss a class because they overslept or because they are on holiday, but also when students claim that they cannot complete or submit an assignment either due to heavy course load or to taking up student jobs (Keith et al. 2005). In addition, when Pinto (2019) asked ten professors to evaluate student excuses in 50 sample emails, he found that almost half (45%) of the excuses were evaluated as ineffective by the instructors. Also, they perceived excuses especially unfavourably when students attempted to avoid the consequences of their (lack of) actions, and thus they shifted the responsibility from themselves to the professors. Accepting responsibility for missing classes or deadlines or for not completing assignments usually occurs only when students understand that their professors are in a position to be able to decide about the consequences of their actions (Martin et al. 2011).

## **3. The study**

### **3.1. Research questions**

The main goal of the present study is to examine the email excuses Hungarian university students of English send to one of their instructors as well as the extent to which these excuses are perceived to be acceptable by the students. Therefore, the paper aims to answer the following research questions: 1) In what situations do Hungarian university students send email excuses to one of their instructors? 2) What types of excuses do students make and with what frequency? 3) How acceptable do Hungarian university students find these excuses? 4) What are the reasons behind the (un)acceptability of the excuses from a student perspective?

### **3.2. Data collection and analysis**

To answer the research questions, three different types of data were analysed. First, a corpus of 115 student emails was compiled from the more than 150 emails that students had sent to a university instructor, i.e. the author of the present paper, between August 2022 and February 2024. Initially, all the emails written by Hungarian students studying English at the university over that period of time were considered for the corpus; however, replies to any previous messages from the instructor or replies in a chain of messages were excluded. Then, the corpus of 115 emails was first analysed based on whether the emails contained any excuses or not. Subsequently, the data on excuses were coded according to the situations that evoked the excuses: deadline issues, course issues, and absences. Then, the following categories were coded based on the types of excuses: technological issues, illness, time, memory issues, individual study plans, family/personal issues, others, and combinations of the different types. Finally, the frequency occurrences of excuses were calculated.

Secondly, based on the types of excuses the student emails are comprised of, an acceptability task was designed that required participants to evaluate the extent of acceptability of excuses on a 4-point Likert-type of scale from not acceptable at all (marked by one) to completely acceptable (marked by four). The question the respondents had to evaluate was the following: “If a student is late with one of their course assignments (presentation/test/homework/paper/reading/etc.), which of the following excuses are acceptable for being late?” The eight excuses in the list were: illness, computer/internet problems, bad memory, family issues, lack of time, too many assignments at the same time, boring/unchallenging assignment, not clear what the assignment is. The task was completed by two cohorts of participants. First of all, second-year university students in the English BA/teacher training programme were asked to complete the questionnaire online, in English, in November 2023. Thirty students volunteered and provided their assessment anonymously in the questionnaire. Additionally, fifth-year university students in the English teacher training programme were invited to volunteer in interviews about student excuses in February 2024. Altogether fifty-three students participated in the semi-structured interviews where they were required to complete the same acceptability task and explain the reasons behind their evaluations in Hungarian. For the purposes of the present paper, all the translations of the Hungarian examples into English are my own throughout the article. Finally, the data on acceptability were analysed quantitatively, while the rest of the interviews were transcribed and examined with the help of content analysis.

## 4. Results and discussion

### 4.1. Student excuses in emails

First of all, the analysis of the corpus of 115 emails for excuses shows that 74 (64%) of them contained student excuses. This finding is in line with the outcome of several studies on student excuses (Duran et al. 2005, Ewald 2016, Pinto 2019), according to which excuses are prevailing features of student emails. Secondly, the situations in which students made these excuses were classified into the following three categories (see *Table 2*): 1) deadline-related issues, 2) course-related issues, and 3) absences from classes. More than half (58%) of the excuses were sent to the instructor to request deadline extension regarding the submission of homework in the first place (24%), followed by asking to reschedule presentations (22%) and retake tests (9.5%). In two instances, students asked for deadline extension in case of academic papers. The rest of the excuses were course-related issues (26%) – for example, course schedules and requirements for course completion – or about absences from classes (16%). Overall, these situations are similar to those in other investigations; however, the frequencies of these settings differ. In other words, while Pinto (2019) found that students make excuses most frequently due to absences (81.5%) and less frequently due to assignments (12.5%), the present study shows that meeting the deadline for various assignments seems to be the most challenging issue for Hungarian university students.

**Table 2.** *The frequency and percentage of excuse-evoking situations in student emails (n = 74)*

Excuse-evoking situations	Frequency	Percentage
<b>1) Deadline-related issues</b>	<b>n = 43</b>	<b>58%</b>
a) homework	18	24%
b) presentations	16	22%
c) tests	7	9.5%
d) academic papers	2	2.5%
<b>2) Course-related issues</b>	<b>n = 19</b>	<b>26%</b>
a) schedules	13	18%
b) requirements	6	8%
<b>3) Absences from class</b>	<b>n = 12</b>	<b>16%</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>74</b>	<b>100%</b>

As far as the excuse types are concerned (see *Table 3*), various problems with technology are the most frequently used excuses (34%), followed by illnesses (20%) and issues with time or timing (12%). Student excuses also include the explanation of having forgotten something or individual study plans that they have in case they participate in different exchange programmes. It can also be

seen that there might be combinations of various excuses (7%), for example, time issues combined with technological problems, and other excuses (7%), for example, their study/assignment partner did not cooperate, or the student was out of town. The least frequent excuses Hungarian university students used in their emails were issues related to the family (4%).

**Table 3.** *The frequency and percentage of student excuses (n = 74)*

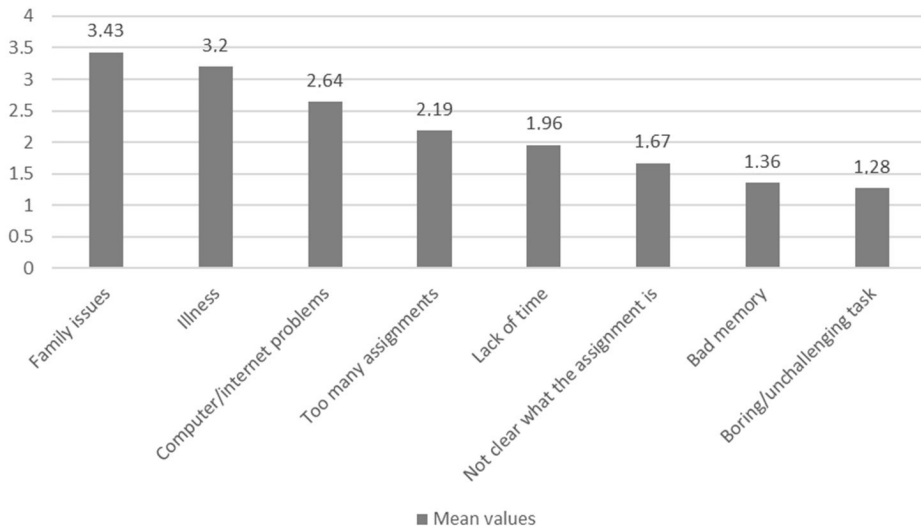
<b>Excuse types</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Issues with technology (computer/internet)	25	34%
Illness	15	20%
Issues with time/timing	9	12%
Student forgot something	6	8%
Individual study plan (e.g. exchange programmes)	6	8%
Family issues	3	4%
Other issues	5	7%
Combination of different issues	5	7%
<b>Total</b>	<b>74</b>	<b>100%</b>

In the case of illnesses, the present study shows some similarities to previous research on student excuses (see *Table 1* above), inasmuch as they are either the most or the second most frequently used excuses. At the same time, the findings of the current research contradict the results of previous investigations to some extent since while family-related issues or family emergencies are rather frequently made by students in the above-mentioned studies (for example, Caron et al. 1992, Carmichael and Krueger 2014), the analysis of Hungarian students' emails shows that this is the least commonly used excuse among them. One of the explanations of this discrepancy can be attributed to the differences in the data collection and data coding methodologies in the existing literature on student excuses. That is, while several investigations analyse students' self-reports on their excuses in questionnaires (among others, Caron et al. 1992, Song 2013), the present study has collected naturally occurring email data for analysis. What is more, research focusing on student excuse data in emails (for instance, Ewald 2016, Pinto 2019) apply a different categorization, i.e. personal issues, for the coding of a similar type of excuse. Lastly, Hungarian students in the interviews in the present study caution not to use issues related to the family or family emergencies as excuses and conclude that "none of the students will take them [family-related issues] lightly and lie about them" (Participant 42). In addition, although problems with technology are the most often used excuses in the student emails in the present analysis, issues with technology are not as frequently referred to by students in other studies (see, for example, Ferrari et al. 1998, Carmichael and Krueger 2014, Che Ku Kassim and

Sallem 2023). This finding of the investigation also questions Curry's claim (2023), according to which the category of issues with technology will be irrelevant in student excuse research due to advanced technological development.

## 4.2. Students' perceptions of student excuses

As for the acceptability of the excuses, first, the mean values of the evaluations provided by all the students ( $n = 83$ ) were calculated (see *Figure 1*). As it can be observed, family issues ( $M = 3.43$ ) are rated as the most acceptable excuses by the Hungarian university students in the study. Illnesses ( $M = 3.2$ ), computer/internet problems ( $M = 2.64$ ), and when students have too many assignments at the same time ( $M = 2.19$ ) are still considered as acceptable excuses. This outcome supports the idea that students consider family-related issues and illnesses to be most likely accepted by their instructors (Keith et al. 2005, Song 2013, Curry 2023).



**Figure 1.** The rank order of the acceptability of the eight excuse types by mean scores (1 = not acceptable at all, 4 = completely acceptable)

On the other hand, lack of time ( $M = 1.96$ ), not understanding ( $M = 1.67$ ) or forgetting the assignments ( $M = 1.36$ ), and boring/unchallenging tasks ( $M = 1.28$ ) are evaluated as less acceptable by the participants. These results show that Hungarian university students are more likely to accept excuses based on external causes, that is, family-related issues, illnesses, or technological problems, than ones based on internal causes, for instance, their inability to understand the assignments, their forgetfulness, or their perception of the tasks as being boring or unchallenging. This outcome seems to be in agreement with the findings of

previous research showing that excuse makers tend to generally attribute the causes behind their excuses to external factors instead of internal ones because by doing so, they attempt to lessen their own, personal responsibility for their lack of action or for their wrongdoing (Weiner et al. 1987). As for students, when they fail to meet the deadlines of assignments or the requirements for their courses, they are likely to refer to external causes when they excuse their behaviour, by shifting the blame or responsibility to others, for example, to their grandparents, their doctors (Stein and Ostrowsky 2016), or their professors (Pinto 2019).

Indeed, the interview data shed light on further factors that affect the acceptability of student excuses in the present study. First, participants seem to evaluate the excuses as less acceptable when they think that excuse makers would be able to control the situation but they choose not to do so. In this sense, using the excuse of not understanding the assignment is rather unacceptable since students could have asked for help in many ways, as indicated in examples 1 and 2.

(1) “Then you contact the teacher about what to do exactly, and they can explain it to you [...] you can ask for help, you can find information on the internet, from your peers.”

(2) “I have about fifteen peers of the same age; there would surely be at least one person who could explain what the task is so that I can understand even if the teacher was unable to.”

In the same way, not taking action when one has difficulties in remembering the assignments or deadlines or when one finds the tasks boring or unchallenging is also unacceptable. In both cases, students could have control over the situation by writing down important information and deadlines in one’s notebook or smartphone, setting the alarm or notifications in the first situation and finding what makes the task interesting in the latter one (as it can be seen in Example 3).

(3) “You can find something interesting in everything, I don’t think anything exists that would be completely uninteresting.”

Another important factor that influences the acceptability of excuses is their timing. In general, excuses can be made either in a retrospective or in an anticipatory manner (Snyder and Higgins 1988b). Participants in the present study claim that when the deadlines for the assignments are set in advance and students have enough time to complete the assignments and submit them in time, all retrospective excuses made after missing the deadline are unacceptable. Nevertheless, they also agree that anticipatory excuses are acceptable and should generally be seen more favourably by the instructors (as seen in Example 4).

(4) “If they tell it to me one or two days before [the deadline], I can accept that. I suppose that they have tried but could not finish or anything else, and if they were sick the whole week long, they should tell me about it at the beginning of the week.”

Lastly, the acceptability of excuses depends on whether the students can prove that the excuses they make are legitimate. Although research on student excuses shows that instructors seldom request proof when students send them excuses in emails (Caron et al. 1992, Carmichael and Krueger 2014, Curry 2023, Che Ku Kassim and Sallem 2023), participants in the current study tend to accept excuses only when evidence is provided that the excuse is not fraudulent (Example 5). This creates a complicated situation, as it is rather difficult, if not impossible, to provide documentation for most of the excuses. Also, even when students support their excuses with some kind of proof, it is still not easy to ascertain the legitimacy of the excuses (Abernethy and Padgett 2010). At the same time, participants in the current study also consider student–teacher rapport as an element that can prove the legitimacy of the excuses (as it can be seen in Example 6).

(5) “It is a compelling reason, but many students take advantage of this, so it needs to be reconsidered. I would request something else besides it, for instance, a [medical] certificate.”

(6) “It is important to have some kind of prior relationship or familiarity with the students and to know to what extent they tell the truth or that on previous occasions they were diligent and submitted everything, but this one time they did not, and then the teacher is more likely to accept these reasons, I think.”

## 5. Conclusions

University students failing to complete their assignments, academic tasks, and course requirements in time invoke one of the most challenging situations for university instructors in general. When students attempt to remedy these transgressions, they are very likely to do that by sending emails to the instructors with requests for allowances, accompanied by excuses that aim to explain or justify missing the deadlines. These excuses put the instructors into even more demanding situations where they have to decide whether to accept these excuses and enable students to compensate for the wrongdoings or to reject them and let students bear the consequences of their (lack of) actions. Recurring instances of this phenomenon inspired the author of the present study to investigate student email excuses

written by Hungarian university students in the first place and their perceptions of these excuses in the second place. The overall results show that issues related to technology (computer, internet) are used most frequently by students as excuses; nevertheless, the most acceptable excuses are that of family-related issues.

Although the paper investigated the topic of student excuses from a variety of different angles, the present study is not without limitations. First of all, despite the fact that the question about the truthfulness of emails is a crucial matter both in the academic context and in the field of research, the study was unable to examine this aspect of student email excuses. In addition, participants in the interviews were all final-year teacher trainees who, due to the nature of their training, could not be considered as student participants anymore. In other words, their perceptions of student excuses were strongly influenced by their teacher identity, as they have already completed at least one semester of teaching practice, thus having identities not only as students but also as teachers. An implication for future research follows from this limitation – namely, to have comparable data and to be able to see students' perceptions of student email excuses in more detail, first- or second-year teacher trainees or BA students should be invited to take part in the interviews.

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