



Social media policy

Version: 2.0 | Version effective: 15/04/2024

Audience

Department-wide

Purpose

This policy supports the Department of Education's (department) approach to the effective and acceptable use of social media when using departmental information communication technology (ICT) facilities, assets and/or digital devices for work purposes and in a personal capacity.

Policy statement

The department supports the use of technology to advance its objectives and improve engagement with its stakeholders. With the inherently public nature of online communication, the department is committed to ensuring employees understand their responsibilities related to the appropriate use of social media. Employees must ensure their behaviour is consistent with the [Public Service Code of Conduct](#) and the department's values and objectives to ensure organisational commitments are achieved and the good reputation of the department and public service is upheld.

Principles

Principle	What this means for the department
Accountability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employees have the right to contribute to public discussions on community and social issues in a personal capacity. • Employees take reasonable steps to ensure that any published, forwarded or liked online content on social media, made in their personal capacity, is represented as their own views and not those of the department, the Queensland Government or as official Queensland Government statements. • An employee's online communication must reflect the department's values and align with the Code of Conduct for the Queensland Public Service and the department's strategic objectives, Standard of Practice and related policies.

Principle	What this means for the department
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Employees responsibly use public resources in accordance with department policies and procedures. This includes corporate knowledge and intellectual property, noting the requirements in copyright. Employees have limited personal use of ICT systems and devices, in accordance with the Use of ICT systems procedure.
Confidentiality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Employees follow information privacy legislation and maintain the confidentiality of information they have access to, that is not publicly available, and use it only for its intended purpose. Employees obtain consent when using or disclosing personal information or images for work purposes, in accordance with the Obtaining and managing student and individual consent procedure. Employees do not use confidential or privileged information to further their personal interests. Employees continue to maintain the confidentiality of official information when they leave public service employment.
Safe and inclusive environments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> When using social media for work purposes, employees promote safe and inclusive online environments that are free from harassment to ensure the wellbeing of students, other employees and members of the community. Employees contributing to public discussions on community and social issues in a personal capacity, ensure their online content is not disparaging towards colleagues, students and their parents/carers, school management or the education sector. Employees must maintain professional boundaries on social media and avoid accepting or initiating 'friend' requests or 'following' students, including recent ex-students (who may still be connected to current students). Employees never exchange personal images with students and never post student work samples, student images, or confidential or personal student information obtained in the course of their duties on personal social media accounts.

Requirements

1. Legislative obligations

The acceptable use of social media, and any related work performance or personal conduct matter (including misconduct), that fall within the scope of this policy are managed under the relevant legislation as detailed below.

All posting, commenting on, and sharing of content on social media, including in an employee's personal capacity should reflect a commitment to conduct that meets the highest ethical standards. Failure to do so may give rise to disciplinary proceedings under the [Public Sector Act 2022 \(Qld\)](#) and could be considered a criminal

offence under the [Criminal Code Act 1899 \(Qld\)](#). [Section 40](#) of the [Public Sector Act 2022](#) details the work performance and personal conduct principles that each public sector employee is guided by.

Under the [Anti-Discrimination Act 1991 \(Qld\)](#) it is unlawful and unfair to discriminate, sexually harass, vilify, or victimise anyone in Queensland and this includes online.

Under the [Criminal Code Act 1995 \(Cwlth\)](#) it is also an offence if a person uses a carriage service to menace, harass or cause offence. This includes within emails, text messages and calls, and social media communications.

Personal information is protected under the [Information Privacy Act 2009 \(Qld\)](#). It is important employees take appropriate steps to protect personal information. Employees have a duty to refrain from publishing or otherwise disclosing on social media any confidential information obtained in their capacity as an employee of the department, particularly personal information about or images of employees, students and other individuals over 18 years of age.

The [Human Rights Act 2019 \(Qld\)](#) provides freedom of expression. While employees are free to express themselves, respect should be given to all people. As employees we must ensure the use of social media online does not impact on or limit others human rights.

2. Department requirements

The department acknowledges the benefits of social media as a communication and educational tool, and supports its appropriate use. Employees have the right to contribute to public discussions on community and social issues in a private capacity. However, employees should consider that the information they share or engage with on social media online (during and outside of work hours), may have the potential to affect the good reputation of the government, the department, its employees or students.

Employees should be aware that, when using social media in a personal capacity, they may be identifiable as a Queensland Government employee, whether or not they explicitly refer to their employment or when they post (or respond to a post) under an alias. Personal comments about public issues may have the potential to compromise, or be perceived to compromise, an employee's ability to properly perform their official duties.

Any social media work performance or personal conduct matter (including misconduct) identified that sits within the scope of this policy, is managed by the department under relevant policies and procedures.

The department's [Social media for school and departmental promotion procedure](#) provides further advice about the use and management of official departmental social media accounts and online communications.

The [Use of ICT systems procedure](#) outlines the processes for employees to use, protect, secure and support the department's ICT facilities, devices, services and systems. Any personal use of departmental ICT systems and devices must also be carried out in accordance with this procedure.

Any conflicts of interest arising from an employee's social media activity (including as a social media influencer) must be disclosed and managed in alignment with the [Conflict of interest policy](#).

Alleged breaches of this policy must be reported to [Integrity - Intake, Referrals and Partnerships](#) in accordance with the department's procedures for managing employee conduct, including the [Allegations against employees in the area of student protection procedure](#). The [Individual employee grievances procedure](#) and the [Occupational violence prevention procedure](#) may also apply relevant circumstances

Definitions

Term	Definition
Carriage service	Any form of electronic communication method.
Device (or ICT device)	Electronic equipment designed for a particular communication and/or function, including but not limited to computers, mobile devices, television sets, digital or analogue recorders such as DVD and video, photocopiers, printers and other imaging equipment.
Employee	A staff member, contractor, consultant, work experience student.
ICT facility	An electronic service designed for a particular communication and/or function, which includes but is not limited to electronic networks, intranet, internet, extranet, email, instant messaging, webmail, fee-based web services and social media.
Personal capacity	For the purposes of this policy, 'personal capacity' relates to activities undertaken by an employee outside their official capacity as a departmental employee.
Social media	Websites, technology, applications or tools that enable active and participatory publishing and interaction between individuals over the internet; characterised by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • relationships • user participation • user-generated content • collaboration • multi-directional conversations • highly accessible and scalable publishing • 24/7 operation and availability.
Social Media Influencer	A person with the ability to influence others about the business of education, the profession of teaching or by promoting or recommending items on social media for personal profit or gain.

Legislation

- [Criminal Code Act 1995 \(Cwth\)](#) Sections 474.15 and 474.17
- [Human Rights Act, 2019 \(Qld\)](#) Part 1 Section 7, Part 2 Divisions 1, 2 and 3
- [Information Privacy Act 2009 \(Qld\)](#) Schedule 3 (IPP1, IPP4, IPP9)
- [Public Sector Act 2022 \(Qld\)](#) Section 91
- [Public Sector Ethics Act 1994 \(Qld\)](#) Parts 2 and 3, Division 1 Section 5, Division 2 Sections 6, 7, 8 and 9, Part 4, Division 1 Section 10.

- [Work Health and Safety Act 2011 \(Qld\)](#) Section 28

Delegations/Authorisations

- Nil

Policies and procedures in this group

- Nil

Supporting information for this policy

- Nil

Other resources

- [Code of Conduct for the Queensland public service](#)
- [Cybersafety and reputation management](#) (DoE employees only)
- [Department of Education Standard of Practice](#)
- [Tips for staff using social media](#), eSafety Commissioner, Australian Government
- [Information governance policies](#) (DoE employees only)
- [Queensland Government's Personal use of social media guideline](#)
- [Professional boundaries](#), Queensland College of Teachers
- [Social media](#) (DoE employees only)
- Queensland Government's [Principles for the use of social media networks and emerging technologies](#)
- [Digital footprint checklist](#) (DoE employees only)
- [Online reputation](#) (DoE employees only)
- [Social media and the school community](#) (DoE employees only)
- [Teachers and social media](#) (DoE employees only)

Department of Education policies and procedures

- [Allegations against employees in the area of student protection procedure](#)
- [Conflict of interest policy](#) and [procedure](#)
- [Individual employee grievances procedure](#)
- [Information privacy and right to information procedure](#)
- [Obtaining and managing student and individual consent procedure](#)
- [Occupational violence prevention procedure](#)
- [Preventing workplace bullying, sexual harassment and unlawful discrimination policy](#)

- [Social media for school and departmental promotion procedure](#)
- [Use of ICT systems procedure](#)

Contact

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Integrity and Capability

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15/04/2029

Superseded versions

Previous seven years shown. Minor version updates not included.

1.0 Social media policy

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