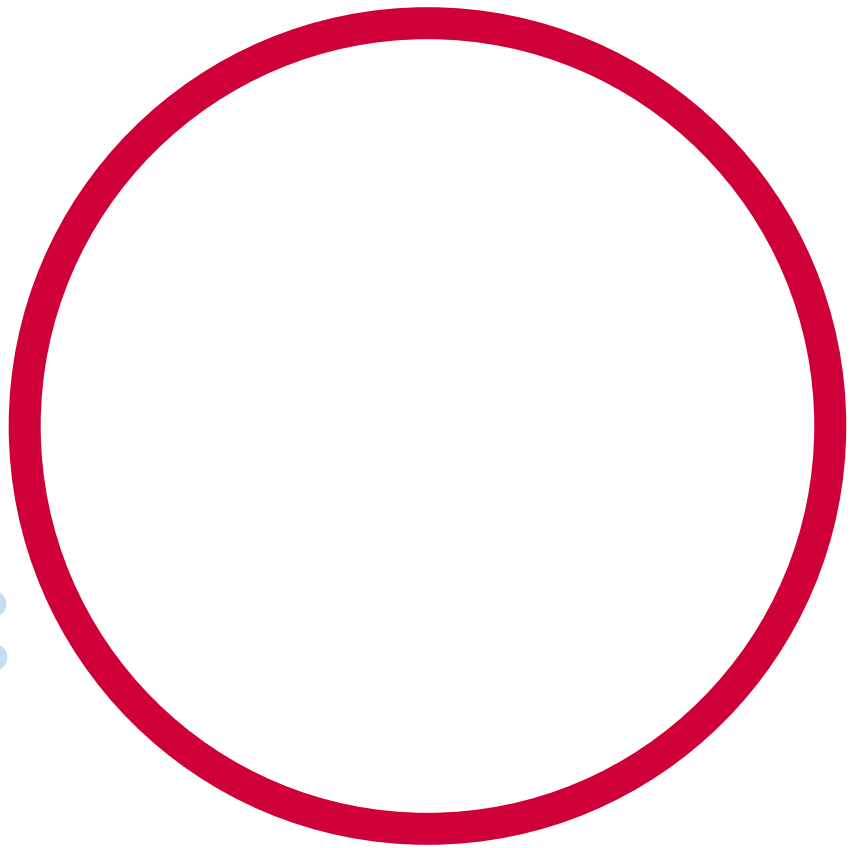
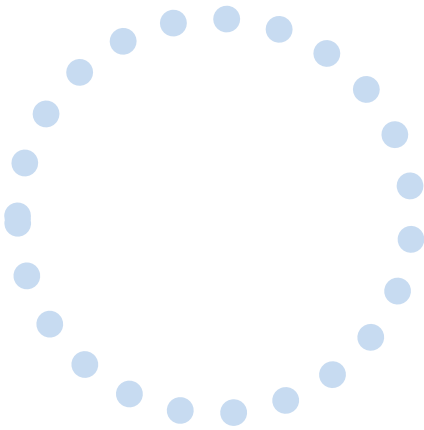
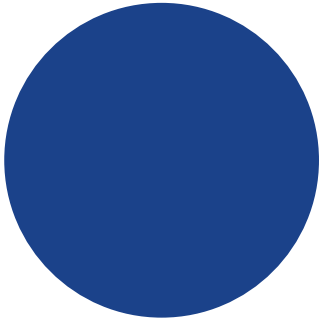


# Student use of digital devices and online services guide



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# Student use of digital devices and online services guide

The Student use of digital devices and online services policy for NSW public schools arrived in Term 1, 2020. To reflect the new policy requirements, schools need to update or develop a school procedure in consultation with the school community.

## The policy and supporting resources

The [Student Use of Digital Devices and Online Services policy](#) supports NSW public school communities to manage students' use of digital devices and online services. It promotes the learning, safety and wellbeing of students and the management of any risk of harm and distraction.

The Department offers [supporting resources](#) to help you implement this policy in your school. Along with this checklist, these include:

- sample school procedure and eform
- frequently asked questions
- definitions of key terms
- accredited professional learning for teachers
- student workshops for stages 2-4
- parent information slide pack
- communication resources.

## Develop your school procedure

This guide is intended to support development of school procedure for your school. Follow the cycle of review, consult, develop, implement and evaluate to ensure your procedure meets the needs of your school community in line with the policy.

### Review

Review your current school procedure or approach to managing digital devices and online services. Consider how closely it aligns with the new policy requirements and accepted school practice.

A [sample school procedure](#) and [online form](#) are available.

## Consult

Engage with students, parents, carers, and school staff to inform development of your school procedure.

Students, parents, carers, and school staff are to be consulted in the development of your school procedure. Students may be represented by their Student Representative Council and parents and carers by the school's Parents & Citizens association as appropriate.

Refer to the [Consult with your school community](#) section for more guidance on this process.

## Requirements

Your school procedure must include any **mandatory requirements** set out in the policy, including any restrictions, the need to make reasonable adjustments and to consider exemptions for individual students.

The following areas should be considered during consultation and for inclusion in the school's procedure.

### Primary schools (mandatory)

The use of digital devices by primary school students (personal or school provided) must be restricted during class, recess and lunch unless:

- approved by a teacher or principal for an educational purpose
- use forms part of a reasonable adjustment for student learning and wellbeing
- an exemption has been granted for other reasons.

Principals, in consultation with their community, have discretion to make decisions about student use of digital devices in all other school related settings, including before and after school.

### Secondary schools (mandatory)

Principals, in consultation with their community, have the flexibility to make decisions about restricting or permitting student use of digital devices (personal or school provided) in all school-related settings, including during class, at recess and at lunch.

If you are applying any digital device restrictions, you are obliged to make reasonable adjustments for student learning and wellbeing needs and consider exemptions for individual students.

## Contexts and settings

Describe the school's approach to restricting or permitting student use of digital devices and online services in a range of contexts and settings.

Contexts and settings where the policy applies may include:

- during class (restricted for primary school students)
- at recess and at lunch (restricted for primary school students)
- before and after school
- on school grounds or in designated spaces
- on excursions and other school events such as camps
- on other educational sites such as TAFE
- during detentions and exams.

## Roles, rights and responsibilities

Students, parents and carers, principals, teachers and non-teaching staff all have a role to ensure students use digital devices and online services in safe, responsible and respectful ways.

The sample school procedure lists a number of recommended inclusions for each stakeholder group and provides a sample list of expected student behaviours.

## Storage

Describe the school's approach to managing the storage of digital devices (personal and school provided).

Schools are under no obligation to provide storage facilities for personal devices. Schools should consider the liability they assume when they take possession of students' personal digital devices. Consult the following Legal Issues Bulletins regarding liabilities.

- [Bulletin 8](#) - Claims for loss of or damage to personal property and use of private motor vehicles by staff, parents and students
- [Bulletin 35](#) - Misuse of technology in schools
- [Bulletin 56](#) - Confiscation of student property

Schools can approach their local [Asset Management Unit](#) to discuss what support may be available.

## Exemptions (mandatory)

Describe the school's approach in regards to exemptions.

An exemption from parts of the school procedure can be requested from the principal by parents, carers, school counsellors, school psychologists and student support officers, and, if required, students themselves. This may cover times when or places where use would otherwise be restricted.

Except where required by law, the school principal has discretion to consider and approve exemptions and to choose which parts of the school procedure the exemptions applies. The exemption may be ongoing or for a certain time period.

If your school has restricted digital devices during school hours, it is suggested that you require students and parents and carers to communicate with each other via the school office. This expectation needs to be clearly communicated to your school community.

Examples of exemptions include but are not limited to:

- a student has a wellbeing need to privately contact a support service or their parents or carers
- a student is a young carer
- compassionate reasons such as a family member having a new baby, undergoing an operation or facing terminal illness. Additionally a student may have restricted times when they can contact a family member living overseas or in incarceration.

If your school has restricted digital devices during school hours, consider requiring students and parents and carers to communicate with each other via the school office. This expectation needs to be clearly communicated to your school community.

## Reasonable adjustments (mandatory)

Some students require reasonable adjustments to their learning and support needs under the Disability Standards for Education 2005. A disability includes a medical condition impacting a student.

The school must consult the student, and their parents or carers as appropriate, in determining the adjustments for the student.

Reasonable adjustments may include access to digital technologies to participate in the education on the same basis as a student without a disability.

Providing reasonable adjustments to students with disability is an obligation under the Disability Standards and does not require students or parents or carers to seek an exemption under this policy.

## Incident management

Describe your school's approach to managing incidents of inappropriate use of digital devices and online services, including breaches of the procedure.

Inappropriate use of digital technology should be addressed according to your school's existing behaviour management plan and wellbeing and disciplinary procedures, departmental policy and any other statutory and regulatory obligations. This includes incidents outside of school where there is a clear and close connection to the school.

A link to your school's existing behaviour management plan and wellbeing and discipline procedures may be all that is required. Consult the following Legal Issues Bulletins regarding liabilities that arise when student property is confiscated.

- [Bulletin 8](#) - Claims for loss of or damage to personal property and use of private motor vehicles by staff, parents and students
- [Bulletin 35](#) - Misuse of technology in schools
- [Bulletin 56](#) - Confiscation of student property

## Bring your own devices (BYOD) program

The policy states that all school principals, in consultation with their school communities, can make decisions about participation in and implementation of a BYOD program.

Digital devices provided under a BYOD program are covered by the new policy, which does not distinguish between personal and school provided devices. If you choose to have a separate school procedure on bring your own device arrangements it will need to be updated to reflect the new policy requirements.

If your school is participating in a BYOD program, you might want to include any specification requirements as an appendix in your school procedure, as demonstrated in the sample school procedure. You should communicate with your school community about any device specification requirements your school may have.

## Write your school procedure

Adopt and adapt the [sample school procedure](#), amend your existing school procedure, or develop a new one using the [online form](#) (STAFF ONLY).

The procedures should be clear and accessible and written in plain English so it can be more easily understood.

# Implement

## Communicate

Communicate your procedure with students, parents and carers and staff.

Promote the Student Use of Digital Devices and Online Services procedure at school assemblies, in newsletters, on your school website and [posters](#) in high-traffic areas such as the library, front office, bathrooms, First Aid area, library, and student services area.

## Provide staff training

School staff should be trained and familiar with the policy and your school procedure. In Term 1, 2020, the Department released a 1 hour accredited [professional learning course](#) on the new policy. This can be delivered by school staff.

## Conduct student workshops

The Department has developed three different 2 hour [Digital device student workshops](#) aligned to NSW Curriculum for Stage 2, 3 and 4 students. These include hands-on, discussion-based activities that benefit students and the whole school community.

## Evaluate

Once implemented, monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the school procedure and make adjustments if needed.

The policy requires that school principals monitor and periodically review the suitability of their school procedure.

Collect data and analyse it to inform your evaluation of process quality and impact of the policy and procedures.



# Consult with your school community

The new policy will be most effective when staff and families recognise their complementary roles in teaching students to use digital technology in a safe, responsible and respectful ways. Schools need to involve their whole community as active and valued participants in its implementation.

## Best practice for community involvement

Obtain feedback from the school community on how the policy can best be applied at school. Keep the school community informed, listen to and acknowledge their concerns. Provide feedback on how their input has influenced decisions and is directly reflected in the final school procedure.

Partner with the school community on specific details of the policy/procedure – get them directly involved in identifying challenges and providing innovation and advice around developing alternatives and formulating solutions.

## Consultation methods

Schools can use surveys, parent information evenings, school councils, calls for submissions, the School Parents and Citizens' Association, Student Representative Councils, advisory committees and other participatory decision-making forums to involve school community members.

## Information versus consultation

Be clear about what aspects of the procedure the school community can influence, and what parts you are simply informing them about. If people can't actually influence or change anything, they should be made aware.

## Organise a team

Establish a team of staff members to be subject matter experts, champion the policy/procedure and be a first point of contact for other staff, students and parents/carers.

## Communicate early, often and honestly

Advise staff, students and parents/carers of the new policy as soon as possible to give them plenty of time to review it, consider it and have their say. Update them regularly about how they can contribute, what stage school procedure development is at, and any

timeframes or deadlines. Schools that successfully manage the use of digital devices have found communicating in advance of key changes to be critical to success community engagement.

## Further support

The Office of the [eSafety Commissioner website](#) has information about online safety issues including cyberbullying, as well as professional learning for teachers and resources for schools, students and parents.

The Department's [Digital Citizenship website](#) provides practical advice to students, teachers and parents on the responsible use of technology, addressing safe and ethical online behaviour. Articles and resources are linked to the NSW and Australian Curriculum.