



WEDDERBURN
COLLEGE

POLICY: STUDENT MOBILE PHONE & INTEGRATED TECHNOLOGIES

PURPOSE

To ensure that all students and members of our school community understand:

- (a) our commitment to creating a learning environment that enhances the wellbeing and safety of all of our students
- (b) our aim to provide a learning-focused environment free from unhelpful technological distractions
- (c) the need to help students manage screen time in line with National Guidelines for Physical Activity & Sedentary Behaviour Guidelines and promote physical activity
- (d) the need to create spaces and opportunities for real time, face to face communication within the school day with peers and staff.
- (e) our school's procedures for responding to inappropriate student behaviour on mobile phone/integrated technologies.

SCOPE

This policy applies to all students at Wedderburn College. Staff use of technology is governed by the Department's Acceptable Use Policy and school-based professional expectations.

DEFINITIONS

For the purpose of this policy, 'mobile phones' are defined as being any device, systems, or hardware including smart watches or devices which allow a user to access, receive, view, record, store, communicate, copy or send any information such as text, images, audio, or video. Integrated technologies refers to any other technological device, including but not limited to, laptops, iPads etc.

POLICY

Vision for the learning environment at Wedderburn College.

Wedderburn College is committed to the learning, wellbeing and safety of all of our students. In line with the college values of Respect, Responsibility, & Resilience, the college has a responsibility to manage pre-conditions for learning which include calm, learning-focused classrooms and recreational spaces that are free from distractions or obstacles which prevent full participation. Additionally, the college has a duty of care to both work in partnership with families and the wider community to protect our children from the potentially harmful effects of mobile phones, and to manage this risk accordingly.

Wedderburn Colleges recognises that mobile technologies occupy a significant part of everyday life for some young people. The college acknowledges that students are only at school for six and a half hours, five days a week and that they may have access to mobile phones for significant time outside of school. Therefore, as with drugs and alcohol, respectful relationships and cyber safety, the college will continue to educate all students through the curriculum about how to use and interact with mobile forms (and all technology) responsibly and appropriately, about personal and others',

wellbeing. When the college that an educational purpose exists for the use of portable devices, the school will organise these provisions.

It is the intention of this policy to:

- reduce screen time in line with relevant national guidelines
- promote physical activity
- reduce distractions in the learning environment
- reduce the incidence of FOMO (fear of missing out) anxiety and apprehension in young people
- reduce negative impacts on mental health
- promote more opportunities for socialisation and recreation
- support the development of impulse control and healthy emotional regulation
- promote healthy brain development and self-esteem

Wedderburn College believes that the absence of mobile phones in the student cohort allows the development of valuable social skills and increases students' social connectedness within the school community to help them thrive in our inter-connected world. The school's vision is to empower students to build and use real communication skills to reach their personal best and fully equip them to contribute positively to society as happy, healthy young adults.

The intention of the Student Mobile Phone Technologies Policy is to create a safe and healthy learning space.

Wedderburn College acknowledges that there is sufficient and broad community concern about this issue and its effect on the wellbeing of our young people to motivate this policy, even while research in this area is ongoing and not fully conclusive. The reasoning behind this policy direction is:

- it supports Australia's Physical Activity & Sedentary Behaviour Guidelines for Children¹ and Young People that states that **no more than two hours a day should be spent on any type of screen**. This policy will greatly assist young people in reducing current number of screen hours they are accumulating. Alarming statistics from recent research from the Royal Children's hospital (Australian Child Health Poll 7 June 2017) found that one in five (21%) teenagers are spending 12 hours or more on screens on a typical weekday; the most used screen type cited is smartphone technology².
- it focuses on the curriculum learning intentions and removes the distraction of students feeling compelled to check-in on mobile phone messages or similar. Research is growing around the number of times young people feel the growing need to access their mobile for social media updates and the incidence of 'FOMO' - fear of missing out (an anxiety or apprehension around the idea that others might be experiencing something that a student is not) and the negative health consequences for young people's mental health. Young people surveyed in the Stress and Wellbeing in Australia Survey (2015) revealed results which showed a strong association between the level of social media use and an increased negative impact on young people's mental health. Sixty percent of teens feel brain 'burnout' with the constant connection to social media. Wedderburn College wants to create a safe space where this pressure to constantly connect is removed and to encourage real social communication with their peers and teachers without the constant pressure to stay up to date across the school day is completely removed³.

¹ <http://www.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/content/health-publhlth-strateg-phys-act-guidelines> (9 Aug 2018)

² https://www.rchpoll.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/ACHP-Poll7_Detailed-Report-June21.pdf (20 Aug 2018)

³ <https://www.mindmatters.edu.au/about-mindmatters/news/article/2015/12/09/what-s-fomo-and-why-do-50-per-cent-of-aussie-teens-worry-about-it-> (9 Aug 2018)

- it encourages more face-to-face social interaction and communication during student break-times. A Victorian school recently created a mobile free school and reported that lunch times became a place of “laughter, where people were actually interacting and socialising”⁴
- it provides a safer place of socialisation and recreation because students’ access to social media communication is removed. Adolescence is a time where one’s impulse control (self-control) about decisions e.g. sending messages and images is greatly reduced and most likely to falter due to the slow development of the brain’s decision making capability. Creating a mobile free zone allows students time to reconsider message they need to send at a later time after further thinking time without the phone in the hands.⁵

Furthermore:

- Mobile phone technologies are too easily used at the expense of face-to-face communication which places significant limitations on the time students have available at school to practice important social skills. Our policy will create a space for this.
- A student mobile free college removes the urge for students to constantly update their social status on mobile apps and will hopefully reduce the FOMO addiction growing in our young people.
- The intention to create a learning space totally free from distraction is informed by research that acknowledges the mere presence of a young person’s phone consumes their attention even when it’s not being checked. It has been shown that phones can reduce working memory capacity even when they are upside down, silent on our desk compared to when it is located in another room. Our intention is to remove the mobile technology for our young people for the entirety of the school day to ensure their working memory can focus on the learning at hand, not updates on their mobile phones.

Student behavioural expectations

Students are expected to keep their mobile phone off school property.

Students or families who believe they require special consideration in relation to this policy are required to complete an ‘*Application for exemption, variation or special consideration of a school policy*’ form and attend an interview with their Parent/s, Guardian/s, or Carer/s to meet with the Assistant Principal to discuss their personal circumstances.

When a student acts in breach of the behaviour standards of our school, Wedderburn College will institute a staged response, consistent with this policy which is in support of the Department’s *Student Engagement and Inclusion Guidelines*.

Breaches of this policy by students can result in a number of consequences which will depend on the severity of the breach, the disruption caused to the learning environment, and the context of the situation. This includes:

- confiscation of mobile phone/integrated technology
- lunchtime detention
- afterschool detention
- suspension
- other consequences as outlined in the school’s Student Wellbeing and Engagement and Bullying Prevention policies.

⁴ <https://www.theage.com.au/national/victoria/noise-levels-dialled-up-as-school-s-total-phone-ban-gets-kids-talking-20180220-p4z0zq.html> (9 Aug 2018)

⁵ <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4182916/> (20 Aug 2018)

If a student actively uses a mobile phone on school grounds, a staff member will work with the student and follow the consequences as outlined in the policy below.

- Upon first breach of the Mobile Phone & Integrated Technologies Policy: If a staff member hears a student mobile phone or sees a student's phone on school property, the staff member will request the student to turn the phone off and hand it to the staff member. The confiscated phone will then be placed at the front office or with the Assistant Principal. **The confiscated phone will only be returned to students' parents, guardians or carers, not to the student.** That student will also be required to do a lunchtime detention. The initial teacher managing the situation needs to document the situation on the student's Compass profile under behaviour management.
- Upon second breach of the Mobile Phone & Integrated Technologies Policy: repeat of first breach consequence as well as an interview with Assistant Principal. The initial teacher managing the situation needs to document the situation on Compass.
- If a third breach of the Mobile Phone & Integrated Technologies Policy occurs: consequences will be determined on a case-by-case circumstance that will involve further interviews with the Assistant Principal and Principal but may include detentions both during and after school, or suspensions.
- If a student does not follow teacher direction and/or chooses to be uncooperative, the staff member, having reminded and warned the student as per the usual referral process, is required to notify the Assistant Principal or Principal at their earliest convenience, and make a chronicle entry.

REVIEW CYCLE

This policy was created on 20 August 2018 and is scheduled for review in December 2019.