

DIGITAL USER'S POLICY



**International
Virtual School**

Digital user's policy for the I.V. School

Description

Learners across the world are becoming more and more engaged in social networking, blogging, wikis and many other forms of cyber communication. Schools are now being challenged in how these activities can be encouraged to develop in constructive and educative ways as part of the learning experiences at school, while at the same time schools are also having to manage these activities to avoid the possible risks which can follow from careless or malicious abuse of these activities, particularly outside of school. Social media can also be used to improve communication between the various parts of any school community. Social media can be described as any form of online publication or presence that allows users to engage in multi-directional conversations in or around the content on the website. Social media includes but is not limited to: WhatsApp, Facebook, Ning, Twitter, YouTube, MXit, blogs, wikis, social bookmarking, document sharing and email. Institutions need to establish clear Policies and Guidelines which are acceptable to the school, the teachers, parents and learners.

The International Virtual School (I.V.), by its nature, will use IT as a major element of our mainstream practice both in the delivery of the curriculum and in attendant administration of education. The Policies and Guidelines laid out in this document serve both to encourage and extend the use of these media in constructive and educative ways, as well as limiting and containing the possibilities of destructive, or counter-productive instances.

The Policies and Guidelines laid out in this policy are to assist the enforcement of the CYBERCRIMES AND CYBERSECURITY BILL of the Republic of South Africa, particularly the regulations and restrictions set out in Chapter 3 - Malicious Communications of the aforementioned act.

Policy

This Policy applies to all sectors of the school – teachers, administrators, parents and learners.

- When teachers are using or allowing the use of social media in schoolwork they should regard participation in such online media as an extension of their virtual classrooms and anything which is permitted in class is acceptable online, and anything which would be unacceptable in a classroom should also be unacceptable online.
- Any bullying, insulting, racial or sexist language, or derogatory or offensive comment is forbidden, as is any practice which is at odds with the school's values and practices.

- **Nothing should take place online which might bring the school into disrepute.** Staff, parents or learners should not abuse any privileged or confidential information they might have access to in any way in private social networking media.
- Teachers should not befriend on Facebook, or any other social media platform, any of the learners who are participating with I.V., except in the case of a site specifically set up for professional purposes.
- Where staff, parents or learners are engaging in online activities they must remember that social media are, by their very nature, public documents, and appropriate care needs to be taken when using them.
- Where staff are identified with the school and are engaged in inappropriate fashion, the school can intervene to prevent reputational damage to the school. Such abuse of the media could result in disciplinary action.
- Where learners are identified with the school and are engaging in inappropriate fashion, the school will intervene to prevent damage either to the school or to the individuals involved. When learners conduct themselves inappropriately without being identified as connected with the school, parents must accept their roles in managing the private activities of their children. They should not expect the school to police the private and out-of school activities of learners of the school; but the school might choose to intervene in such situations if it is in the best interest of the child to do so.

Guidelines

Guidelines for Students

These guidelines for students are provided as support and guidance to ensure that practices do not result in transgressions of policy.

- Be responsible for whatever you write. Be aware of what you post online. Social media venues are very public. What you contribute leaves a digital footprint for all to see. Do not post anything you wouldn't want friends, enemies, parents, teachers, or a future employer to see.
- Be cautious about publishing photographs, providing personal details including surname, phone numbers, addresses, birthdates and pictures.

- Where there is a possibility that you may be identified with I.V., you should act in a manner which is consistent with the general philosophies and values of the school, and does not bring the school into disrepute.
- Follow the school's code of conduct when writing online. It is acceptable to disagree with someone else's opinions, but if you do, respond in a respectful way. Make sure that criticism is constructive and not hurtful.
- Do not share your password with anyone else and change your passwords regularly to protect your privacy.
- Do your own work! Do not use other people's intellectual property without their permission. It is a violation of copyright law to copy and paste other's thoughts. When paraphrasing another's idea(s) be sure to cite your source with the URL (Uniform Resource Locator). It is good practice to hyperlink to your sources.
- Be aware that pictures may also be protected under copyright laws. Verify you have permission to use the image or establish that it is under Creative Commons attribution. (Creative commons is a non-profit that offers an alternative to full copyright. Offering work under a Creative Commons license does not mean giving up copyright.)
- How you represent yourself online is an extension of yourself. Do not misrepresent yourself by using someone else's identity, or by creating a fictional persona which can be linked back to you.
- Blog and wiki posts should be well written. Follow writing conventions including proper grammar, capitalization and punctuation. If you edit someone else's work be sure it is in the spirit of improving the writing.
- If you run across inappropriate material that makes you feel uncomfortable, or is not respectful, tell a member of staff right away.

Guidelines for Online Communication for classes

These guidelines are for the online communications between teachers and students on the I.V. school online portal.

- The group discussions, including via the Disqus plug-in, are for academic purposes only.
- No posting of any irrelevant comments or material will be allowed.
- No inappropriate or derogatory language will be permitted during these group discussions and there will be severe consequences for anyone who does not adhere to these rules of good behaviour.
- All group discussions will be monitored by both the teachers as well as administrators.

- The webinars, or online verbal discussions, must adhere to standard classroom etiquette with regards to what is discussed.
- The teacher must monitor the discussion and not allow any inappropriate behaviour.
- All webinars must be recorded by the teacher and uploaded to the course notes as an extra resource for learners who may have missed it.
- One-on-One online communication sessions between learners and teachers are not encouraged and an extra fee, not included in the course fee, will be charged for this privilege.
- We will require the teachers to be available online for live questioning at certain periods of the week/day.
- Students have regular weekly contact with their Advisor teacher with monthly one-on-one meetings to review goals and progress should the learner require/request it.
- Because of serving a global community, our teachers will not be able to answer immediately but will answer within 24 hours.
- Parents of students under the age of 18 must be informed of any one-on-one sessions taking place for them to be given the opportunity to be present during the session.
- The teacher will be required to record these sessions and upload them to the administrator to be kept for a period on 1 month as record of the one-on-one.
- The frequency of these sessions will be monitored and any misuse from either teachers or learners will result in disciplinary action.