



**Diocese of Toowoomba  
Catholic Schools**

# Personal and work-related use of social media guideline

This guideline has been adapted from a template provided by the  
Queensland Catholic Education Commission (QCEC)



## Purpose

The purpose of this guideline is to assist employees to choose appropriate online community activities for use with students and to maintain professional standards when using social media.

The guideline provides information to employees regarding the use of social media with a view to reducing the instances of

- › harassment, bullying and/or discrimination
- › inappropriate/offensive comments
- › inappropriate use of confidential information and intellectual property
- › protecting the interests of the employer, its employees and students.

### Top 5 social media risks



- › reputational/brand damage
- › disclosure of confidential information
- › misuse of intellectual property
- › bullying and harassment
- › difficult to erase



## Guiding principles

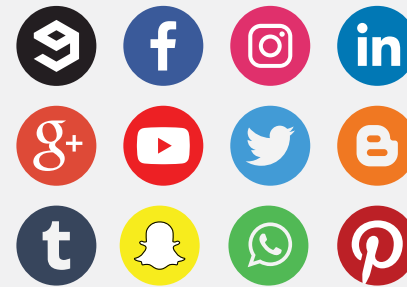
Online behaviour should at all times demonstrate a Christ-centred respect for the dignity of each person.

The TCS Code of Conduct and Acceptable Use of ICT Systems and Resources policy must always be observed.

Online interactions between employees and students must only ever occur in an educational context.

Employees must behave in an ethical manner when interacting and using online community sites and resources.

Personal social networking must be in accordance with the professional standards expected of a TCS employee.



## De inition

Social media is defined as any form of online publication or presence that allows communication, including, but not limited to, Facebook, LinkedIn, Instagram, blogs, forums, discussion boards, chat rooms, Wikis, Twitter, Instant Messaging Apps, TikTok and YouTube.

## Guideline

**Employees must understand they are accountable for their postings online and via other electronic communications that are job-related – particularly online activities associated with a work email address, while using TCS property, networks or resources or while discussing school-related activities.**

Employees must recognise that

- › their ability to serve as a positive role model for students and as a representative of the TCS is a critical aspect of their employment
- › social media activities may be visible to current, past or prospective students, parents, colleagues and community members
- › accordingly, they must exercise discretion when using social media (even for personal communication) when those communications can reflect on their role as an employee.

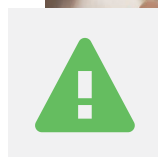
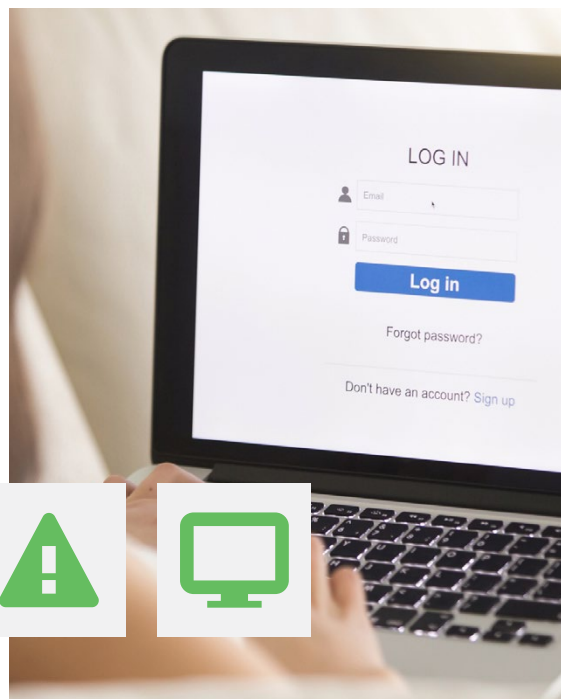
An understanding of the uneven power dynamic that exists between employees and students is essential to professional behaviour. Employees must act in a manner that always respects and never exploits the power inherent in these relationships.

## Security privacy and access

Ensure that all of your social media accounts have the appropriate security and privacy settings for the messages being disseminated and the audience you are trying to reach. Most social media platforms have security settings in the 'profile' section of the platform.

Be aware that all data entered onto any social media platform is in the public domain and subsequently could be taken out of context or used against employees or TCS. This includes personal identifiable data, payment details and contacts; so ensure only minimal data is provided to these platforms.

As a general rule to protect your data, ensure all electronic devices you use are updated and have appropriate protection against computer viruses and malware.



## Work-related use of social media

- › Employees are encouraged to use appropriate online learning communities with their students to achieve educational outcomes.
- › When using online community activities with students, consideration must always be given to the age and developmental level of students.
- › Employees must ensure they prepare students to act in accordance with the guiding principles before using online community activities for learning.
- › Permission must be sought from the school principal or supervisor before posting online any commentary, school information, school or staff photographs or other identifying images.
- › Parental/carer permission must be obtained for students to register with online learning communities.
- › Employees must respect student's rights to privacy in academic work, records and results when posting online.
- › The learning activity must not be linked back to a student's own personal social network.
- › Employees must provide students with clear instruction about their responsibility for appropriate interaction with others and suitable content posting online. Students should be taught about the appropriate use of social media within the context of cyber-safety education and responsible digital citizenry and to report any attacks or inappropriate content directed at them.

- › Employees must not post comments deemed to be defamatory, obscene, proprietary or libelous.
- › Employees must exercise caution with regards to exaggeration, colourful language, guesswork, copyrighted materials, legal conclusions and derogatory remarks or characterisations.
- › Employees are not permitted to use any school or TCS logos, official photographs or any other intellectual property of proprietary materials in any postings to social media without the consent of their school principal or Executive Director: Catholic Schools.



## Personal use of social media

- › Social media, in a personal use context and not directly linked to the employee's role in the school, must not be used as a learning tool for students.
- › Employees must not accept students as 'friends' or contacts on their own social networks, or otherwise interact with students on social media.
- › Employees are advised to use professional discretion before accepting ex-students or parents/carers of current students as friends via social media.
- › Employees must not discuss students or co-workers or publicly criticise the school or its personnel on social media.
- › Employees must not post images that include students on social media (note the difference in a work-related context).
- › Employees should give a high level of consideration to the appropriateness of posting personal comments online that may encroach on work issues. All comments of a private nature should not identify TCS or be able to link an employee to TCS.
- › It is advisable to discuss with personal friends the need for discretion when they post images or information about you on their own social networks.
- › In no case should use of social media interfere with or impede an employee's duties or responsibilities to the Toowoomba Catholic Schools Office, school or students.
- › Employees should ensure they use social media both in a personal or professional context to represent the Catholic workplace well and not to use social media to bring themselves or their employer into disrepute.



## Consequences of non-compliance

- › Non-compliance with these guidelines may be grounds for disciplinary action under the TCS Code of Conduct, up to and including loss of access to network systems, suspension from work or termination of employment, and/or including police involvement for unlawful or unacceptable use of social media.
- › Employees who use social media in their own time using their own resources should note that their private comments posted publicly could potentially have repercussions at work. Such instances will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis with consideration to the possible damage to the reputation of TCS.



## TCS policies and related documents

Acceptable use of ICT systems and resources policy

ICT in Catholic Schools policy

Student protection policy

Code of Conduct

Student protection processes and guidelines

Guidelines for the use of social media in the school environment

Addressing workplace bullying and harassment procedure

Anti-discrimination, equal employment and addressing sexual harassment procedure

Employee grievance resolution procedure

## Legislation



Australian Human Rights Commission Act 1986

Copyright Act 1968

Anti-Discrimination Act 1991 (QLD)

Child Protection Act 1999 (QLD)

Education (General Provisions) Act 2006

Defamation Act 2005 (QLD)

Privacy Act 1988

Fair Work Act 2009



## Diocese of Toowoomba Catholic Schools

post PO Box 813, Toowoomba, Qld 4350 phone 07 4637 1400  
email [enquiries@twb.catholic.edu.au](mailto:enquiries@twb.catholic.edu.au) web [www.twb.catholic.edu.au](http://www.twb.catholic.edu.au)

*...act justly; love tenderly; walk humbly with your God* Micah 6:8

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