

Acceptable Use Policy

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Introduction

This policy reflects the vision and ethos of Galway ETSS, which is committed to enabling students to reach their full potential academically and socially. We recognise that access to Information and Communication Technology (ICT) provides valuable opportunities for students to develop essential skills for life in the 21st century. To support this, Galway ETSS offers access to ICT resources for student use.

This Acceptable Use Policy sets out the standards, guidelines, and behaviours expected when using school technologies or personally owned devices on the Galway ETSS campus or during school-organised activities.

Scope

The aim of this Acceptable Use Policy (AUP) is to ensure that all members of the school community benefit from the learning opportunities provided by Galway ETSS's internet and technology resources in a safe and effective manner. Access to these resources is a privilege, not a right, and may be withdrawn if the policy is not followed. Breaches will result in appropriate consequences.

This policy has been developed by a working group including the Principal, Deputy Principal, Teachers, Students, Parents, Guardians and representatives of the Board of Management.

This policy applies to all students, staff, volunteers, parents/guardians, and others who access the internet or use technology within Galway Educate Together Secondary School or during school-related activities.

It is envisaged that this policy and its implementation will be reviewed periodically by the following stakeholders: Board of Management, Staff, Students, and Parents & Guardian Community.

Expectations for Responsible Use

When using the internet and other technologies, students, parents/guardians, and staff are expected to:

- Treat others with respect at all times
- Avoid any actions that could bring the school into disrepute
- Respect the privacy of all members of the school community
- Comply with copyright laws and acknowledge creators when using online content and resources

Managing Misuse and Promoting Safe Use

Misuse of the internet or school technology will result in disciplinary action in line with the school's Code of Positive Behaviour and Bí Cineálta Anti-Bullying Policy. The school also reserves the right to report any illegal activities to the appropriate authorities.

Galway Educate Together Secondary School may address incidents that occur outside school when they impact the well-being of students or staff. In such cases, the school will inform parents/guardians where possible and work collaboratively to provide appropriate supports and consequences.

To promote safe and responsible use of the internet, Galway ETSS implements the following strategies:

- Student Education: Internet safety is taught through the SPHE curriculum and may include awareness sessions delivered by external experts.
- Staff Development: Teachers receive ongoing professional development in internet safety.
- Parent/Guardian Guidance: Parents and guardians are offered advice and resources during workshop sessions and information evenings.

Content Filtering and Security

Galway Educate Together Secondary School uses Level 4 content filtering on the school's broadband network. This level allows access to educational resources, YouTube, and selected websites, while blocking personal websites and social networking platforms such as Facebook.

In addition, *Jamf Safe Internet* filtering is applied at the device level. This system uses Apple's native frameworks to block malicious, non-compliant, or inappropriate domains, ensuring secure and policy-aligned network usage.

Any attempt to bypass these filters (e.g., using proxy sites or VPNs) will result in consequences in line with the Code of Positive Behaviour and Anti-Bullying Policy.

Responsible Internet Use

Students:

- Students must use the internet for educational purposes only. Downloading materials or images unrelated to schoolwork is prohibited.
- Students and staff must not intentionally visit sites containing illegal, obscene, hateful, or pornographic material.
- Accidental access to inappropriate content should be reported by students immediately to a Tutor, the Principal, or the Deputy Principal.
- Staff will report access of inappropriate content in line with the school's Code of Positive Behaviour.
- Plagiarism and copyright infringement are strictly prohibited. All sources must be accurately acknowledged. This requirement is especially important for any material included in project work submitted for assessment or certification by the State Examinations Commission (SEC). Students must also comply with any additional guidelines issued by the SEC or the school regarding academic integrity and appropriate referencing of sources.
- All internet and device usage may be monitored for security and compliance purposes.
- Uploading or downloading large files that disrupt network performance is not allowed unless directed by a teacher.
- Students and staff should never disclose or share personal information or passwords.

- File-sharing and torrent sites are banned. These sites often involve illegal downloading, spread harmful software, and breach copyright law.

Parents/Guardians:

While the school uses filters and WiFi restrictions to protect students online, these safeguards do not apply outside school. Parents should implement home internet safety measures and parental controls through their own service provider. For students using iPads, Apple's Screen Time feature can help parents set limits on app usage, block inappropriate content, and monitor device activity.

Email and Messaging

Galway ETSS provides each student with an official email account through the Microsoft 365 platform for school-related communication.

- Use of Personal Email: Personal email accounts may only be used in agreed circumstances (e.g., college applications, UCAS, career references).
- Prohibited Uses: School email accounts must not be used to register for social networking services, apps, or games.
- Students are prohibited from messaging one another through Microsoft Teams unless the communication is directly related to schoolwork or school activities.
- Files, links and images shared should be school-related and appropriate.

Security and Privacy

- Students and staff should never share email login details.
- A secure record of student passwords should be kept at home and should be accessible by parents/guardians.
- Suspicious emails should not be opened. If in doubt, students should consult a teacher before opening messages from unknown senders.

Content Standards

- Sending material that is illegal, obscene, defamatory, or intended to harass or intimidate is prohibited and will be addressed under the Code of Positive Behaviour.
- Downloading non-study-related materials is prohibited and will be addressed under the Code of Positive Behaviour.

Reporting

- Any communication that makes a student feel uncomfortable, or is offensive, discriminatory, threatening, or bullying in nature, must be reported immediately to a member of staff. Students must not respond to such messages.

Responsibility

- All emails and opinions expressed are the responsibility of the author and do not represent the views of the school.

Social Media and Messaging

The internet offers many social media tools that enable communication and collaboration. While these platforms can provide valuable opportunities, Galway ETSS expects all members of the school community to use them responsibly to protect confidentiality, uphold respect, and maintain the school's reputation.

This policy applies to all forms of social media and messaging, including but not limited to: Instagram, TikTok, X (formerly Twitter), blogs, chatrooms, forums, podcasts, Wikipedia, content-sharing sites (e.g., YouTube, Flickr), and emerging platforms.

Students and staff should not:

- Use social media, messaging services, or the internet to harass, impersonate, insult, abuse, or defame others.
- Discuss personal information about students, staff, or other members of the school community on social media.
- Use school email addresses to set up personal social media accounts or communicate through such platforms.
- Engage in any activity on social media that could bring Galway ETSS into disrepute.

- Represent personal views as those of Galway ETSS.
- Use the school name, acronym (Galway ETSS/GETSS), or logo on personal accounts, websites, or social media platforms.

Personal Devices (Other Than School iPad)

Students bringing personal devices to school must follow the same rules as if they were using school equipment.

Students should not:

- Use non-approved electrical devices (including mobile phones, wireless earphones/earbuds, and non-educational devices) during school hours.
- Use smartwatches for anything other than checking the time in class. Smartwatches are not permitted during exams.
- Contact parents/guardians directly during the school day via text, call, or email. All communication should go through the school office.
- Arrange to leave school independently using electronic devices. All requests must go through a teacher, tutor, or the main office.

Additional Guidelines:

- Mobile phones must be stored in lockers or school bags. If seen or heard, they will be confiscated for the day. Repeated offences will require collection by a parent/guardian and may lead to a meeting.
- Galway ETSS accepts no responsibility for lost, stolen, or damaged devices. Parents are encouraged to purchase insurance for iPads and other devices.
- Earphones and headphones may only be used for educational purposes when instructed by a teacher.
- Device use on school trips is at the discretion of the supervising staff member. Devices may be collected on overnight trips.

School iPad Usage

Galway ETSS provides iPads with pre-installed applications to support learning and achievement. These devices are intended to help students develop essential technology skills, collaboration, and teamwork for a global environment. All users must review this policy and sign the agreement to protect the hardware and software.

Students and staff should:

- Bring their iPad or device to school every day, fully charged.
- Keep the iPad in a secure place when not in use.
- Follow all protocols outlined in this policy.
- Use the device for school purposes only.
- Keep the iPad in a protective case at all times, both in school and at home.

Students and staff should not:

- Exchange iPads or devices with another student or teacher, except in exceptional circumstances and with permission.
- Allow others to retain or remove the iPad from their presence.

Additional Guidelines:

- Students will be advised when iPads are required in class. When not in use, they should be placed face down on the desk.
- iPad use is not permitted before school or during break and lunch (except for approved clubs). Devices should be stored in a school bag or locker at these times.
- Students must not delete or clear their internet browsing history unless instructed by a teacher.
- Student iPads will be checked regularly to ensure appropriate use. If requested for inspection, students must unlock the device and enter the passcode.

Digital Learning Platforms (including video conferencing)

Galway ETSS's digital learning platform is owned and managed by the school and is designed to support secure, two-way communication for teaching and learning.

Students should:

- Use only their school email address to access the school's digital learning platform.
- Store all school-related media and data on the school platform.

- Use school devices for capturing and storing media.
- Follow GDPR and the school's data protection guidelines when using digital platforms.
- Keep login credentials secure and never share passwords.

Students should not:

- Use personal email addresses to create accounts on school digital platforms.
- Share access details or allow others to use their accounts.
- Each user will be provided with unique login credentials to ensure security and accountability.

Audio, Images and Video

Care must be taken when capturing audio, photographs, or video to ensure students are appropriately dressed and not engaged in activities that could bring individuals or the school into disrepute.

Students should:

- Seek permission from a staff member before recording audio, taking photos, or videos on school grounds or during school activities.
- Ensure all media captured for school purposes is appropriate and respectful.

Students should not:

- Record, take, use, share, publish, or distribute images or audio of others without their permission.
- Take personal photos, videos, or recordings of other students, staff, or the school building on iPads or other devices (including selfies).
- Share or distribute audio recordings, images, or videos with other students unless specifically requested by a teacher for educational purposes. This includes using AirDrop or any file-sharing apps.
- Share audio, images, videos, or other content online with the intention to harm another member of the school community, whether inside or outside school.
- Share explicit images or videos of students or minors. This behaviour is strictly prohibited and will result in serious consequences as outlined in the Code of Positive Behaviour.

Additional Guidelines:

- Written parental/guardian permission will be obtained before any student media is published on the school website or social media platforms.
- Care should be taken when capturing audio, photographic or video images that students are appropriately dressed and are not participating in activities that might bring the individuals or the school into disrepute.

Inappropriate Activities

The following activities are strictly prohibited when using school technology or internet services. These rules exist to ensure safety, legal compliance, and the integrity of the school's ethos:

- Promotion or conduct of illegal acts (e.g., under child protection, obscenity, computer misuse, and fraud legislation).
- Accessing or sharing racist material, pornography, or child sexual abuse material.
- Promoting discrimination, racial or religious hatred, or harmful content that encourages violence or mental harm.
- Sharing information that is offensive, breaches the school's ethos, or brings the school into disrepute.
- Using school systems to run a private business.
- Attempting to bypass filtering or other safeguards employed by the school.
- Uploading, downloading, or transmitting commercial software or copyrighted materials without proper licensing.
- Revealing or publicising confidential or proprietary information (e.g., financial/personal data, passwords, access codes).
- Creating or spreading computer viruses or other harmful files.
- Generating excessive network traffic that disrupts internet access for others.
- Engaging in online gaming, gambling, or shopping.
- Using social networking sites, instant messaging, or online forums for non-educational purposes.
- Participating in any other activity deemed inappropriate or questionable by the school.

School Websites & Social Media

- Students may have opportunities to publish projects, artwork, or schoolwork online. All content must follow the school's publishing guidelines and approval process before being uploaded to the school website or official social media platforms.
- Students retain copyright for any work they create and publish.
- The school will regularly review its website and social media accounts to ensure that all content protects the safety, privacy, and reputation of students and staff.
- Publication of student work will always be coordinated and approved by a teacher.
- Personal information such as home addresses, phone numbers, or other contact details will never be published on Galway Educate Together Secondary School's website or social media platforms.
- The school will avoid using students' full names in captions for photos or videos posted online.
- Image files will be named appropriately and will not include students' names in file names or ALT tags.

Cyberbullying

Galway Educate Together Secondary School strictly prohibits any online behaviour intended to harm, harass, humiliate, or embarrass another person, whether a student, staff member, or member of the school community. In line with the Anti-Bullying Procedures for Schools, even a single harmful message, image, or video that is likely to be shared or reposted may be considered bullying behaviour.

Cyberbullying can occur through various technologies, including text messaging, social media, email, messaging apps, gaming platforms, and chatrooms. Because it does not require face-to-face contact, cyberbullying can happen at any time and may follow students into their homes. Digital content spreads quickly and is often difficult to remove permanently.

Under the Department of Education's Bí Cineálta Procedures to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour, the school's anti-bullying policy applies not only during school hours and activities but also to online behaviour outside school when there is a clear link to the school (e.g., posts that affect student wellbeing, reputation, or school life). If bullying behaviour continues in school, it will be addressed in accordance with the school's Bí Cineálta policy.

All members of the school community - students, staff, and parents - are expected to treat others with respect when using digital devices and the internet. Engaging in online activities with the intent to harm, harass, or embarrass another individual is strictly prohibited. Incidents of cyberbullying will be managed under the school's anti-bullying and behaviour procedures, which include appropriate sanctions, restorative approaches, and support for all parties involved.

Preventing cyberbullying is a core part of both our Acceptable Use Policy and Bí Cineálta Anti-Bullying Policy. The school promotes ongoing training, awareness campaigns, and collaboration among students, staff, and parents to foster a culture of respectful digital behaviour.

Artificial Intelligence (AI)

Galway Educate Together Secondary School recognises the potential benefits of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in education and is committed to its responsible, ethical, and transparent use within our learning environment.

- **Professional Development:** The school supports ongoing training and professional development for teachers to effectively use AI tools in teaching and learning. Staff must verify the accuracy of AI-generated content before using it.
- **Educational Alignment:** AI tools adopted by the school will align with educational goals, support learner agency, and promote critical thinking and skills development.
- **Continuous Review:** The school will regularly review and adjust its approach to AI integration based on feedback and observed impact on learning outcomes.
- **Monitoring and Safeguarding**: Staff will monitor AI use in classrooms and alert students, parents, guardians, and management if inappropriate use is suspected.
- **Ethical Use and Data Privacy:**
    - All staff and students will receive training on the ethical use of AI, including data privacy and verifying AI-generated information.
    - Entering personal, sensitive, or confidential data into any AI system without proper authorisation is strictly prohibited.
- **Student Responsibilities:**

- §Students must not create, share, or distribute AI-generated material that is illegal, obscene, defamatory, or intended to harass, insult, abuse, or intimidate another person.
- Students and staff must not engage in AI-related activities that could bring Galway Educate Together Secondary School into disrepute.

- **Permitted Use:**
  - AI-generated material may be used for certain activities with prior school permission.
  - Students must properly attribute AI-generated text and images when used in assignments or homework. Guidelines will be provided.
  - When using AI for research, students must fact-check, consult other sources, and reference appropriately.
- **Assessment Integrity:**
  - If there is suspicion that AI tools were used in preparing student work or assessments, the matter will be discussed with the student and their parents/guardians. Appropriate support and consequences may follow.
  - For State Examinations, the school will follow the guidelines and procedures set out by the State Examinations Commission (SEC).
  - Work produced using AI will not be accepted or signed off as the student's own work.

Digital Leadership and Responsibilities for Staff

- **Effective Use of Technology:** Staff should maximise the benefits of available academic resources through the use of iPads and associated technologies (e.g., Office 365, OneNote, Teams, e-learning platforms. Interactive apps, etc.)
- **Promote Mobile Learning:** Staff should encourage and facilitate mobile learning practices to enhance flexibility and engagement.
- **Model Leadership in Learning:** Staff should demonstrate leadership in their own learning by using technology effectively and responsibly.
- **Professional Development:** Staff should actively engage with training opportunities and take a proactive role in their own development and that of their students.

- **Monitoring and Security:** Staff should be aware that all usage—including distributing or receiving information, whether school-related or personal—may be monitored for unusual activity, security, and/or network management purposes.
- **Social Media Guidelines:** The Teaching Council Draft Guidelines for Guidance on Use of Social Media and Electronic Communication are available in the staff handbook and must be read by all teachers before agreeing to this policy.
- **Printing and Photocopying:** School printers and photocopiers are to be used for school business only.

Key Legal Frameworks for Online Safety

Galway Educate Together Secondary School will provide information on key legislation relating to the use of the internet. Teachers, students, and parents/guardians should familiarise themselves with the following:

- **Data Protection Acts 1988–2018 and General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR):** Governs the collection, storage, and use of personal data.
- **Copyright and Related Rights Act 2000:** Protects intellectual property and outlines rules for using copyrighted material.
- **Child Trafficking and Pornography Act 1998 & Criminal Law (Sexual Offences) Act 2017:** Addresses offences related to child protection and online exploitation.
- **Children First Act 2015:** Establishes child safeguarding obligations for organisations and individuals.
- **Harassment, Harmful Communications and Related Offences Act 2020 (Coco's Law):** Criminalises online harassment, harmful communications, and the sharing of intimate images without consent.
- **Criminal Damage Act 1991:** Covers offences related to damaging property, including digital systems.

Signed:  Date: 20th November 2025

Chairperson, Board of Management

Signed:  Date: 20th November 2025

Principal

Appendices

Appendix 1: Student, Parent, Guardian Acceptable Use Agreement Form

I agree to adhere to Galway Educate Together Secondary School's Acceptable Use Policy for internet and digital technologies. I will use these technologies responsibly and comply with all procedures outlined in the policy.

Student's Signature: _____

Student Year & Class: _____

Date: _____

As the parent or legal guardian of the above student, I have read the Acceptable Use Policy and I understand that Internet access is intended for educational purposes. I also understand that every reasonable precaution has been taken by the school to provide for online safety, but the school cannot be held responsible if students access unsuitable websites.

In relation to the school website, I accept that, if the school considers it appropriate, my child's schoolwork may be chosen for inclusion on the website. I understand and accept the terms of the Acceptable Use Policy relating to publishing students' work on the school website.

Parent/Guardian: _____ Date: _____

Appendix 2: Staff Acceptable Use Agreement Form

I confirm that I have received and read the Galway Educate Together Secondary School Acceptable Use Policy (AUP) and agree to comply with all conditions outlined in the policy as they apply to staff.

Staff Member Details

Full Name: _____

Position/Role: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Appendix 3: Student-Friendly AUP

Acceptable Use Policy

At GETSS, every student is required to use their iPad safely, respectfully, and responsibly.

RESPONSIBLE USE

- Bringing your iPad fully charged each day.
- Only using your iPad when a teacher has instructed you to do so.
- Using your iPad for schoolwork only.
- Keeping your iPad face-down when not in use.
- Keeping your iPad safe and in its case at all times.

IRRESPONSIBLE USE

- Accessing inappropriate or harmful content.
- Bypassing filters or accessing games online.
- Recording or taking photos without consent.
- Clogging your iPad storage with memes or internet downloads.

Personal Devices



The use of personal devices such as phones and headphones during school hours is not permitted, unless permission is given from a member of staff.

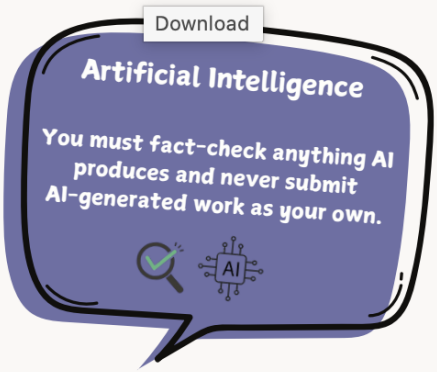


Online Behaviour and Reporting

Online behaviour must be respectful, and in line with our Bí Cineálta Anti-Bullying Policy. This means it must never casue harm, bully, or target others. If you witness bullying, tell a member of staff or an adult you trust, or scan this QR code to make a report.

Online Safety

- Keep your passwords private.
- Use school emails and Teams for learning-related communication only.
- Do not open unknown links or files.
- Never share someone else's photos or information without permission.



Galway
EDUCATE TOGETHER SECONDARY SCHOOL