

# COMMUNICATION AND USE OF MOBILE PHONES – STATEMENT OF PRACTICE

Merici College manages Personal Communication Devices in line with the Catholic Education Archdiocese of Canberra and Goulburn Personal Communication Devices Policy and Student Acceptable Use of ICT Policy, available on the [Catholic Education, Archdiocese of Canberra & Goulburn website](#).

Mobile phones and digital devices are a key part of modern life, and most students carry a mobile phone for safety and communication before and after school. However, when used inappropriately during school hours, mobile phones can contribute to issues such as bullying, disruption to learning, filming without consent, and unsafe internet or social media use.

At Merici College, we are committed to supporting the social and emotional development of our students alongside their academic progress. We encourage students to build real connections through face-to-face interactions, particularly during break times, rather than relying on digital communication.

## Rationale

Merici College understands that many students own a mobile phone or other communication device. These can be important before and after school, for students to contact parents and engage with the wider community.

However, personal communication devices can also represent distraction within the College and limit educational and social engagement. Schools have a duty of care for students during school hours, and for student and staff privacy.

All states and Territories in Australia prohibit the use of personal communication devices in schools during the school day, either partially or completely.

These restrictions apply to all personal communication devices during school hours, on school grounds or at school events and activities.

## Mobile Phone Use Expectations

To promote a safe and respectful learning environment, the following guidelines apply to all students:

- **Personal Responsibility:** Mobile phones are brought to school at the student's own risk. Merici College does not accept responsibility for lost, stolen, or damaged devices.
- **Emergency Procedures:** Phones must be turned off during fire evacuations or lockdowns to ensure students remain attentive and responsive to staff instructions.
- **Classroom and Formal Activities:** Phones must be turned off and stored securely during class time, assemblies, transitions between classes, and any formal school activities unless explicit permission is granted by a teacher or prior approval is given (e.g. for medical reasons).
- **Emergency Contact:** Parents should contact Student Services in emergencies. Students must not contact parents directly if they are unwell; they should report to Student Services, who will follow up appropriately.

- **Filming and Recording:** Never film or record anyone without their consent and never share images or recordings without consent. Doing so may breach Australian privacy laws and could be a criminal offence. This applies to staff, students, parents/carers, and visitors.
- **Examinations:** Mobile phones are not permitted in exam rooms unless prior approval has been granted for medical reasons.

## Year-Level Guidelines

### Years 7–10:

- Mobile phones must not be used during lesson time for calls, messaging, internet access, social media, photography, or apps.
- Students may briefly check and respond to messages during recess and lunch **only at their lockers**.
- Phones must be stored in lockers during class time and may only be accessed with teacher permission or College approval.

### Years 11–12:

- Senior students may use phones during recess, lunch, and study periods.
- Phones must be switched off during class time and may only be used with teacher permission or College approval.

## Exemptions

Students and families may request permission to use personal communication devices during school hours where necessary.

A Principal (or delegate) may approve a student to use personal communication devices where necessary, for example:

- to monitor a health condition
- for students who are the primary carer for a child or family member
- when needed to support a personalised plan,
- where the device is used for translation by a student with English as an additional language or dialect.

Teachers may seek principal (or delegate) approval for students to use personal communication devices during class, where they consider the device adds value to the learning program that cannot be supported by a student's schoolwork device.

## Consequences for Breaches

- If a student fails to follow the expected use of mobile phones, their device will be confiscated and handed to Student Services. It will be sealed and stored securely until the end of the school day.
- Student Services will record the incident on SEQTA.

- If a student refuses to hand over their device, they will be referred to their House Coordinator, who will contact parents.
- Repeated or serious breaches may be escalated to the Head of Student Wellbeing for further action.
- If devices are suspected to have inappropriate material or illegal content, the School/College will inform the student's parents / carers and the Catholic Education Office. Devices will be returned in line with advice by the Catholic Education Office legal/child protection teams.

## Definitions

**Personal Communication Device:** Devices used primarily for communication including mobile phones, smartwatches, and headphones. Does not include students' schoolwork devices such as laptops and tablet computers.

**Schoolwork Device:** Devices used to support teaching and learning such as laptop, desktop or tablet computers – whether personal devices or issued by the school-issued devices. They are not prohibited but are subject to the Student Acceptable Use of ICT Policy.

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**Approved by:** Merici Executive  
**Implementation Date:** January 2026  
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**Merici Contact Officer:** Assistant Principal Wellbeing