



WANGARATTA
HIGH SCHOOL

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Mobile Phone – Student Use Policy

This policy was updated in June 2022. Key changes are as follows:

- *Rationale further articulated*
- *Our aspiration is to have full compliance with our expectations without the need to impose consequences. The policy has been redesigned with the aim of better supporting policy compliance and reducing phone confiscations*
- *Change to consequences for breach. Particularly:*
 - *Confiscated phones are not returned to students. They are only returned to parents/guardians*
 - *Parents are asked to collect confiscated phones no earlier than the next day. We believe that losing access to their device for at least one evening is a fair 'cost' and consequence for not following clearly stated rules*
- *Clarification on the use of headphones and smartwatches*

Purpose

To explain to our school community the Department's and Wangaratta High School's policy requirements and expectations relating to students using mobile phones and other similar telecommunication devices during school hours. The policy has been adjusted to support change and improvement in this area.

Scope

This policy applies to:

- All students at Wangaratta High School and,
- Students' personal mobile phones brought onto school premises during school hours, including recess and lunchtime and on school excursions/camps

Definitions

A mobile phone is a telephone with access to a cellular (telecommunication) system, with or without a physical connection to a network. Digital and smartwatches may work as telecommunication devices when connected to a phone or have their own direct connection. Headphones include wired and wireless devices.

Rationale

School is a time for learning and meaningful social interactions. We want students to be focused on tasks and thinking beyond the very distracting influence of mobile phone notifications and messaging. The school day (including excursions and camps) is a special time when students can be free of the very addictive effects of messaging and social media apps, and the urgency of response that drives a great deal of unnecessary anxiety. The majority of these apps and services are already blocked by filters across all Department school internet access points.

In all schools, there have been a number of negative, harmful and very distracting incidents that are linked to the misuse of mobile phones and other telecommunication devices. This includes inappropriate and unnecessary interactions and conflicts when expectations and consequences are applied by the school or at home by families. It also includes inappropriate communication between students. This policy seeks to address this matter proactively with clear expectations and consequences. Our aspiration is to have full compliance with our expectations without the need to impose the consequences.

Research

Contemporary research explores our desire to connect and seek validation through technologies and how this can lead to anxiety, poor sleep and unsuccessful social interactions¹. Habitual smartphone use may have a negative and lasting impact on users' ability to: think, remember, pay attention or regulate emotion².

Research finds it doesn't matter whether a smartphone is on or off or lying face up or face down on a desk. Having a smartphone within sight or within easy reach reduces a person's ability to focus and perform tasks because part of their brain is actively working to not pick up or use the phone³.

Further information for parents and students on mobile phone use, and its impact on learning and setting boundaries at home [is available here](#).

Policy – student expectations for mobile phones and telecommunication devices

In accordance with the Department's [Mobile Phones Policy](#) issued by the Minister for Education, personal mobile phones must not be used at Wangaratta High School during school hours, including lunchtime and recess, unless an exception has been granted.

Wangaratta High School understands that students may bring a personal mobile phone to school, particularly if they are travelling independently to and from school.

At Wangaratta High School:

- Students who **choose to bring mobile phones to school must have them switched off** during school hours, and they may not be used at all during the school day. They will be securely stored throughout the day in the locked locker or left at Reception.

To avoid confusion, please note these important points:

- **Phone use is not permitted at any time of the school day for any reason**
 - Phones should be turned off. Silencing a phone is not acceptable. (A phone that rings or sounds an audible notification is evidence that the expectations are not being followed)
 - Other telecommunication devices (such as smartwatches) may not be used in similar ways to phones. This means they cannot be used to send or receive messages or make calls, or access. Notifications must be turned off on smartwatches and other such devices.
 - Phones may not be used as clocks (they must be turned off)
 - Students may not make or receive a phone call (*all parent contact should be done via a staff member, usually at Reception, where a phone can be provided*)
 - Students may not send or receive text or picture messages to any person. Students may not record videos or take photos with their phones (see exceptions below).
- Exceptions to this policy may be applied if certain conditions are met (see below)
 - When emergencies occur, parents or carers should reach their child by calling the school's office on 03 5723 0500.

¹ Dopamine, Smartphones & You: A battle for your time <https://sitn.hms.harvard.edu/flash/2018/dopamine-smartphones-battle-time/>

² Smartphones and Cognition: A Review of Research Exploring the Links between Mobile Technology Habits and Cognitive Functioning <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5403814/>

³ The Mere Presence of Your Smartphone Reduces Brain Power, Study Shows <https://news.utexas.edu/2017/06/26/the-mere-presence-of-your-smartphone-reduces-brain-power/>

Policy – student expectations for headphones and music

Music and headphones may be used in class with the teacher's permission. **In most circumstances, permission will not be granted** but is at the discretion of the teacher of that specific class. When permission is granted, **headphones may only be connected to a student's laptop and cannot be accessed via phone** in alignment with this policy.

Headphones worn while connected to a phone are evidence of a mobile phone policy breach, and the phone will be confiscated.

Headphones must be completely removed from the ear when teachers are addressing the class or speaking individually. Recess, lunchtime and movement between lessons are important social times for students, so headphones may not be used or worn during these times.

Parent and Carer Support

We seek the support of parents and guardians by helping your children understand the reasoning for the policy and the expectations and consequences in place at Wangaratta High School.

Please assist your child and us by not messaging or calling students during the day. Students should never be calling you directly as there are important protocols in place already (eg. *Staff assess students who are unwell and then contact parents if necessary; students who are upset or experiencing a wellbeing issue should seek assistance from their teacher and our wellbeing specialists first, who will call parents if required; students can use Reception to call home if required; parents can call and ask for important messages to be delivered to students*).

We seek your support in asking that parents do not collect phones on the day that they are confiscated – please come the next day or a later day at your convenience. Confiscated phones are kept in a secure location until collected by parents. We seek to promote ownership, accountability and acceptance with students for their behaviour and actions. We believe that losing access to their device for at least one evening is a fair 'cost' for not following clearly stated rules. We very much want to avoid any conflicts or adversarial situations and welcome the opportunity to speak with parents and carers about this policy, its implementation and its rationale.

Discussion in advance at home is recommended so that parents can highlight that it may be more than one day before it is convenient for them to collect the phone. It is important to emphasise the 'cost' of the consequence if the confiscation occurred on a Friday.

Enforcement

The specific and immediate response by staff to a breach of the policy (use of the mobile phone during school hours) will include:

- The **staff member that observes the breach will confiscate the mobile phone**. They will direct the student to hand the phone to them. It must be switched off. The phone should be handed in as it was – the SIM card should not be removed.
- Headphones being worn while connected to a phone is evidence of a mobile phone policy breach and the phone will be confiscated. Sending or receiving messages, accessing apps or making phone calls on a smartwatch is likely to be evidence of a policy breach.
- A student who is argumentative or defiant (i.e. refuses to hand over the phone) will receive additional consequences in line with school policies. **These consequences will be in addition to the consequences related to mobile phone misuse.**
- The staff member will complete a COMPASS entry and submit the phone to the main office for labelling and secure storage.
- **Confiscated mobile phones will not be returned to students.** They will only be returned to the parent or carer. We ask **that parents and carers collect their phones the next day or later at their convenience.** Parents – please see section **Parent and Carer Support**. Phones can be collected from the main office by parents or carers during school business hours. The Assistant Principal/s can release a

phone to a student in exceptional circumstances at their discretion, such as an emergency.

- **1st breach of the mobile phone policy** (*when the phone is handed over politely and calmly*): once the phone has been collected by the parent and returned to the student, they may bring their phone to school as long as they continue to follow this policy.
- **2nd and subsequent breaches** (*or the 1st breach if the student is defiant*). Once the parent has collected the phone and returned it to the student, they lose the privilege of having their phone during the school day for four weeks (20 school days). During the 20 days, they must nominate to either:
 - Leave their phone at home at all times OR
 - Hand in their phone to Reception each day for secure storage during class time, and collect at the end of the day.
- If the mobile phone policy breach is linked to the use of a smartwatch as a telecommunication device, then the student is likely to lose the privilege to have such a device at school.
- The Assistant Principal/s will manage persistent and frequent breaches.

Secure storage

Mobile phones owned by students at Wangaratta High School are considered valuable items and are brought to school at the owner’s (student’s or parent/carer’s) risk. Students are encouraged not to bring a mobile phone to school unless there is a compelling reason to do so. Please note Wangaratta High School does not have accident insurance for accidental property damage or theft. Students and their parents/carers are encouraged to obtain appropriate insurance for valuable items. Refer to the Department’s [Claims for Property Damage and Medical Expenses Policy](#).

When students bring a mobile phone to school, Wangaratta High School will provide secure storage via Reception. Secure storage is storage that cannot be readily accessed by those without permission to do so. At Wangaratta High School, students are required to store their phones in their lockers and ensure that their locker is securely locked.

Exceptions

Exceptions to the policy:

- may be applied during school hours if certain conditions are met, specifically:
 - Health and wellbeing-related exceptions; and
 - Exceptions related to managing risk when students are offsite.
- can be granted by a member of the principal team in accordance with the Department’s [Mobile Phones Policy](#).

The three categories of exceptions allowed under the Department’s [Mobile Phone Policy](#) are:

1. Learning-related exceptions

Specific exception	Documentation
For specific learning activities (class-based exception) Eg. A student may ask to use their phone to record a science experiment.	Unit of work, learning sequence and only when the teacher grants permission for it to be used to support learning.
For students for whom a reasonable adjustment to a learning program is needed because of a disability or learning difficulty	Individual Learning Plan, Individual Education Plan

2. Health and wellbeing-related exceptions

Specific exception	Documentation
Students with a health condition	Student Health Support Plan, e.g., a student with diabetes may use their mobile phone to monitor their blood sugar.
Students who are Young Carers	A localised student record, e.g., a young carer providing care to a parent with a health issue may need to use their mobile phone to discuss health issues with medical professionals and the person they are caring for, during the school day.

3. Exceptions related to managing risk when students are offsite

Note – as a general principle, mobile phones may not be used on camps/excursions but exceptions may be granted within the following parameters.

Specific exception	Documentation
Travelling to and from excursions	Risk assessment planning documentation
Students on excursions and camps	Risk assessment planning documentation
When students are offsite (not on school grounds) and unsupervised with parental permission	Risk assessment planning documentation
Students with a dual enrolment or who need to undertake intercampus travel	Risk assessment planning documentation

Where an exception is granted, the student can only use the mobile phone for the purpose for which it was granted.

All exceptions will need to be requested in writing with the supporting documentation. The outcome of exception requests will be recorded on the student's COMPASS record. A mobile phone exception card can also be issued to the student.

Camps, excursions and extracurricular activities

Wangaratta High School will provide students and their parents and carers with information about items that can or cannot be brought to camps, excursions, special activities and events, including personal mobile phones.

Exclusions

This policy does not apply to:

- Out-of-school-hours events
- Travelling to and from school
- Students undertaking workplace learning activities, e.g. work experience
- Students who are undertaking VET at an offsite location

Related policies and resources (note that these policies are under review in 2022)

- [Student Wellbeing & Engagement Policy](#)
- [Mobile Phones – Department Policy](#)
- [Personal Goods – Department policy](#)

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