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**The use of Online Platforms and Social Media**

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**Social Media Description:**

This policy covers personal use of social media as well as the use of social media for Independence High School. The policy applies to personal media platforms such as networking sites (e.g. Facebook, google chat, WhatsApp), Edmodo, Tik Tok, Reddit, Discord, Viber, WeChat, Skype, Hangout, blogs, microblogs such as Twitter, chatrooms, forums, podcasts, open access, online encyclopaedias such as Wikipedia and content sharing sites such as flickr and YouTube. However, this list is not exhaustive and new on-line platforms are to be considered automatically.

This policy also applies to online message boards/forums and comments under news items and other articles to minimise the reputational, legal and governance risks to the students of Independence High School, arising from use of social media in both personal and professional capacities.

**Online/Distance Education**

Online/distance education is defined as a delivery of educational courses and programs which uses a wide range of educational and communication technologies including web-based technologies which incorporates the learning management systems Edmodo with synchronous and/or asynchronous modes of communication. This mode of delivery requires special techniques of online/distance course design and grounded instructional techniques to enhance the students online/distance learning outcomes as well as special organization and administrative arrangements.

### **Asynchronous Communication**

Asynchronous Communication is a mode of telecommunications in which a simultaneous presence of students is not required for communication to take place. Examples are e-mail, discussion forums, text messaging, and recordings. With these technologies, students can communicate at their own pace using web-based tools such as online chat and web conferencing.

### **Synchronous Communication**

Synchronous Communication is a mode of scheduled direct communication in which a simultaneous presence of students is required for communication to take place. Examples are web-based tools such as online chat and web conferencing such as Zoom conferencing and Google Meet.

### **Purpose:**

The purpose of this policy is to set standards of behavior for the use of any social media and online platforms when it concerns students of Independence High School.

While the policy focuses mainly on students, we encourage all parents and teachers to follow the same rules for good behaviour and respectful conduct online and offline.

### **Additional Authority(ies):**

Ministry of Education

Board of Governors

Independence High School Students' Handbook

### **Scope:**

**All those who are part of the Independence High School family (administration, teachers, auxiliary staff, parents, and students),** in particular our students have the right to benefit from the opportunities that exist from the use of social

media/online platforms at school or off school grounds. However, they should all behave within and outside the school in such a manner that builds confidence and trust, ensuring that the image of the school, or themselves are not brought into disrepute.

**Responsible Party(ies):**

Principal: Omar Longsworth

Vice Principal of Academics & Staff Welfare: Clifford Garbutt

Vice Principal of Student Affairs: Samuel Villalta

Homeroom Teachers

Subject Teachers

Heads of Department

School Telephone Number: 523-2220

Independence High School Email: [ind\\_highschool@yahoo.com](mailto:ind_highschool@yahoo.com)

Facebook User Name: [Independence High](#)

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**Policy**

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I. **Online Etiquette:** As a student at Independence High School working with online learning or social media platforms, it is important to note that communication is different than in a face-to-face setting. While we use several opportunities for social interactions, most communication is via written text in our online environment. Because this means you are missing body language cues and immediate feedback from your “listener,” it is very important to understand some common rules for good online etiquette. These are to ensure that the message you intend to convey is received correctly. Please read and follow intentionally.

a. **Be respectful.** While it is easier to say hurtful or disrespectful things without standing face-to-face with someone, it is important to remember that your classmates and instructor are real people who are affected by the words you say and write. It is essential to keep in mind the feelings and opinions of others, even if they differ from your own. Language that is—or that could be construed to be—offensive toward others such as being racist, sexist, and/or heterosexual comments and/or jokes are unacceptable. These include derogatory and/or sarcastic comments and jokes directed at religious beliefs, disabilities and/or age. It will be reported immediately. Users should always use the Internet, network resources, and online sites in a courteous and respectful manner. We suggest that you be positive, and solution oriented at all times.

b. **Be aware of strong language, all caps, and exclamation points.** It is easy for written text to be misread and misunderstood. Have you ever sent a text message with good intent but your recipient thought you were being rude? If so, then you've experienced this firsthand. By being cognizant of strong language, you can identify potential confusions before sending messages. *Tip: Read everything out loud before you send it.*

c. **No Flaming.** Criticism must be constructive, well-meaning, and well-articulated. Please, no tantrums. Rants directed at any other contributor are simply unacceptable and will not be tolerated. The same goes for profanity. The academic environment expects higher-order language.

d. **Be careful with humor and sarcasm.** Certainly, you shouldn't avoid being funny. We love to see your personality shine through online classes. Many of our instructors are exceptionally funny too. But like mentioned in Rule #2, make sure that it is clear you are being funny and not being rude. Emotions and smileys can be helpful when conveying humor or sarcasm so that it is read correctly. Just remember to keep the smiley faces away from academic papers.

- e. **Don't post or share (even privately) inappropriate material.** Users should also remember **not to post anything online that they wouldn't want parents, teachers, or future colleges or employers to see.** Once something is online, it's out there—and can sometimes be shared and spread in ways you never intended. Enough said there. Nothing is truly private online.
- f. **Yes, grammar and spelling matter.** While texting, textspeak can 'b 4 ur' friends, in an educational setting (even online) however, keep it formal. Language is your only tool in an online environment. Be mindful. Your written communication should be professional and reflect proper writing style. Save written shortcuts and less than stellar grammar for Snapchat if you must, but follow grammar rules for school.
- g. **Reliable Sources:** Users should also recognize that among the valuable content online, there also exists unverified, incorrect, or inappropriate content. Users should use trusted sources when conducting research via the Internet.
- h. **Cite your sources.** Whenever you are sharing an idea that originated from someone else (even if it is not word for word), it is good practice to cite that source. This applies to discussion forums too. If you read a great thought in your text, share it, but be sure you let your audience know where you saw it first.
- i. **Dress for success.** Dress appropriate for the virtual classroom: polo shirts, button down shirts, blouses with sleeves, t-shirts, and sweatshirts. Clothing that is inappropriate for the virtual classroom: hats, shirts with offensive logos or messages, ripped or torn clothing, pajamas, clothing that reveals too much chest and cleavage. Remember that you are appearing on a camera, so details such as proper lighting and positioning yourself on screen correctly will play a major role in your professionalism during the conference. It is encouraged to pick a wall as your background to help secure your privacy.

j. **Be forgiving.** Remember that not everyone will know these rules before posting. Try to be understanding of others when they struggle with written communication. It is very different from simply talking to a person face-to-face.

Remember:

- Think before you post
- Do not use birth date, your phone number or address or any private or personal information.
- To ensure your safety, be thoughtful about the type and amount of personal information you provide. Avoid talking about personal schedules or situations.
- Always get permission before posting pictures and videos of others

**II. Policy Statement:** Independence High School acknowledges that social media can be a powerful tool to facilitate and enhance communication and learning, making it an effective educational and social tool. It can be used by students, teachers and parents to express their views, comments, ideas and criticism on a range of issues and help build a community of connected scholars. Independence High School expects that students, teachers and parents when using social media or online platforms, show courtesy and respect to all and not to use such media to abuse others, expose them to offensive or inappropriate content or bring disrepute to themselves or the school.

Independence High school expects that each student will strive to be a good digital citizen. **DIGITAL CITIZENSHIP** is the responsible use of technology by anyone who uses computers, the internet, or digital devices to engage in society, politics or government. Regular & effective use entails digital literacy, ethics, etiquette, online

safety, norms, rights and culture; to be sure you are being a good digital citizen think about the following statements:

- The use of “Good Judgement” is essential for proper use of social media.
- We expect everyone to act in good judgement in all situations
- You must follow the school code and policy
- Regardless of your privacy setting, assume that all of your information you have shared on your social network is public information

III. **Procedure**: Students are expected to show respect to each other and to the reputation and good name of the school when using social media.

a. Students are expected to ensure that they:

- are sensitive to the school’s inclusive values(Empathy, Excellence, Honesty, Justice, Patriotism, Respect, Responsibility) to ensure an individual does not feel excluded from a group to which they have a right to belong (DIVERSITY).
- represent their own views and not impersonate or falsely represent to be another person
- do not bully, intimidate, abuse, harass or threaten others (Bullying)
- do not post offensive comments, such as racist and discriminatory comments (Bullying)
- do not use obscene or offensive language towards others or the school as a whole
- Always treat others with respect, and in a positive and considerate manner

- Do not publish, post, or release information that is considered to be confidential or not public.
- Always respect the privacy of the staff members, classmates, and the rights and confidentiality of others
- Taking video/pictures of teachers or students without their knowledge and posting on social media/online platforms is an offense. One cannot post any student or teacher without her/his permission or knowledge. It is advised that you get written consent, even if it is just a message.
- do not post content that is hateful, threatening, pornographic or incites violence against others, such as the public or the school as a whole
- respect the rights and confidentiality of others (given that it does not break other levels of infraction)
- do not harm the reputation and good standing of Independence High School or its stakeholders by using the school images, logo or any legal item without the permission of the school.
- remove any inappropriate postings by others that appear on your wall
- do not post reviews that use inappropriate language.
- Avoid posting inappropriate behavior that infringes on other school rules such as drinking, smoking, or is sexual in nature
- Do not indulge in inappropriate communication or behavior with staff members, adults or even other students (STUDENT-TEACHER INTERACTIONS)
- Do not use gadget to copy and share answers as well as plagiarizing



- Grave social media violation (sexual act, murder, involved in robbery, withholding information that can help to save a life, etc.)
  - Breaking/Damaging someone else’s laptop/gadget/school’s computer
- b. Breach of this policy: A breach of this policy may also involve a breach of other Independence High School’s rules and responsibilities such as the:
- Anti-bullying and Anti-harassment (Include the anti-bullying Policy)
  - Interpersonal relations
  - Responsible behavior
  - The misuse of electronic devices and social media
  - Defamation of another’s character

**IV. Consequences:** Students who fail to abide by the stipulated guidelines in this policy will face disciplinary measures by the administration/student support committee hoping to help them reform and so that others understand that the inappropriate behaviors are unacceptable. Note that all suspensions will be served at home.

Infraction	Consequence
Students are expected to ensure that they:	Failure to abide will result in:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● are sensitive to the school’s inclusive values to ensure an individual does not feel excluded from a group to which they have a right to belong</li> </ul>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Conference with parent in the first instance</li> <li>2. Advice and counselling in the second instance</li> </ol>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● respect the rights and confidentiality of others (given that it does not break other levels of infraction)</li> <li>● remove any inappropriate postings by others that appear on your wall</li> </ul>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>3. A week suspension in the third instance</li> </ol>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● represent their own views and not impersonate or falsely represent to be another person</li> </ul>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. One week suspension, conference with parents and counselling</li> <li>2. Two weeks Suspension, conference with parents and counselling</li> <li>3. Third offence will lead to exclusion</li> </ol>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● do not post offensive comments, such as racist and discriminatory comments</li> <li>● do not use obscene or offensive language towards others or the school as a whole</li> <li>● do not post reviews that use inappropriate language.</li> </ul>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Three days suspension, conference with parents and counselling in the first instance</li> <li>2. One week suspension, conference with parents and counselling in the second instance</li> </ol>

	<p>3. Two weeks suspension, conference with parents and counselling in the third instance</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Always treat others with respect, and in a positive and considerate manner</li> <li>● Do not publish, post, or release information that is considered to be confidential or not public.</li> <li>● Always respect the privacy of the staff members, classmates, and the rights and confidentiality of others</li> <li>● Taking video/pictures of teachers or students without their knowledge and posting them on social media/online platforms is an offense. One cannot post any student or teacher without their permission or knowledge. It is advised that you get written</li> </ul>	<p>1. Minor disrepute (left to the discretion of the administration or the students' support committee) will result in a written apology to the victim. A second minor offense will result in an apology and 2 evenings detention. Continuous minor offences may result in a suspension.</p> <p>2. Major disrepute (left to the discretion of the administration or the students' support committee) will result in a 3 days suspension accompanied by an apology to the victim. A second offence will result in a 5 days suspension. A third offense will result in an extended suspension, signing a</p>

<p>consent, even if it is just a message.</p>	<p>contract stipulating conditions to continue as a student along with an apology.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● do not post content that is hateful, threatening, pornographic or incites violence against others, such as the public or the school as a whole</li> <li>● do not harm the reputation and good standing of Independence High School or its stakeholders by using the school images, logo or any legal item without the permission of the school.</li> </ul>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Two weeks suspension, conference with parents and counselling</li> <li>2. conference with parents</li> </ol>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Avoid posting inappropriate behavior that infringes on other school rules such as drinking, smoking, or is sexual in nature</li> <li>● Do not indulge in inappropriate communication or behavior with staff members, adults or even other students</li> </ul> <p>(STUDENT-TEACHER INTERACTIONS)</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Three days suspension followed by counseling and conference with parents</li> <li>2. Five days suspension followed by counseling and conference with parents</li> <li>3. Session with The Student Support Committee</li> </ol>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Use of gadget to copy and share answers as well as plagiarizing</li> </ul>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Copy or plagiarism will result in a zero being recorded. This will also include notifying the parents of the behavior</li> <li>2. a second offense will once again result in a zero, counselling and a notification to parents.</li> <li>3. A third offense will result in another zero being recorded, a suspension, signing a contract</li> </ol>

	stipulating conditions to continue as a student.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Grave social media violation (sexual act, murder, involved in robbery, withholding information that can help to save a life, etc.)</li> </ul>	1. Exclusion
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Breaking/Damaging someone else's laptop/gadget/school's computer</li> </ul>	<p>1. The student will be required to repair/replace the damaged electronic gadget. Where the gadget cannot be repaired/replaced, the student will be required to purchase a new one.</p>

V. **Be aware of what you post online**: If you see a message, comment, image or anything else online that threatens your safety or reputation, bring it to the attention of the principal, vice-principal, a staff member or parent to begin to mitigate the issue immediately. Social media venues including wikis, blogs, photo and video sharing sites are very public. What you contribute leaves a digital footprint for all to see. Do not post anything you would not want friends, adversaries, parents, teachers, school's administration or a future employer to see. If your posting breaches this policy and brings disrepute to the image of the institution, others or even yourself, disciplinary action as indicated in this policy will be implemented. Given that the school has exhausted the

measures specified in this policy, it will resort to rule 16 (A&B) found in the students' handbook. Also bear in mind that depending on the severity of the situation and/or the choice of the individual(s) affected, the victim reserves the right to decide whether a personal apology will suffice or whether it needs to be done publicly, especially if the offense was public as well. In addition, they also reserve the right to report the situation to the Independence Police; thus, resulting in court action.

The Board of Management, administration and staff expect that this policy will serve to guide your online behavior. We trust that you will see value in the proper utilization of the many online tools that can serve to enhance your growth and development as a student. It is important that you remain conscious of the fact that 'perception' plays a very important role in everything you do and as such you must ensure that the outputs created from your online interactions will serve your best interest at all times.

As an institution, we are cognizant that our blended approach to the teaching-learning process will now become the norm in the facilitation of your educational development. All of us are, therefore, encouraged to utilize the available technology in mutually beneficial ways.