Code of Online Conduct

All policies, procedures, codes of behaviour, and rules of Western University also apply when using online systems and resources. Online resources include all material that is accessed through a computer or telecommunications network.

The "Code of Online Conduct" has been prepared about online communication and behaviour to protect the rights and safety of all. It applies specifically, though not exclusively, to the delivery and support of courses offered by the Faculty of Education.

Privacy and personal Information

Western is bound by law to adhere to the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy (FIPPA) Act. This Act governs the adequate security and sharing of personal information (e.g., race, national or ethnic origin, first language, disability, religion, age, sex, sexual orientation, or marital status, etc.).

To ensure privacy and confidentiality, information on Western's Learning Management System (LMS), OWL Sakai, is stored on a secured server on Western's campus. In addition, students are not required to post personal information (as defined by FIPPA) that they do not wish to share. Students' personal information includes student grades, identification numbers, home phone numbers, personal e-mail addresses, and photos. University faculty and staff protect students' right to privacy and protect students' information from unauthorized access or disclosure.

Please respect the privacy of your classmates and the information that they share in class. As a general rule, avoid saving, taking screenshots of, or posting of other peoples' personal information (e.g., address, telephone numbers, date of birth, educational history, personal email addresses, academic work or pictures) without prior notice and their consent. In the case of minors, consent must be given by their parents or guardians.

Never reveal your Western password to anyone.

More information about protecting yourself and Western from cyber security risks can be found on Western's CyberSmart website. Privacy considerations for Zoom can be found here.

Online Communication

In an online or hybrid course, online class interaction takes place through the mediation of technology. It is the responsibility of both the instructor and students to check and respond regularly both to course-related announcements and forum notices in the LMS and to messages sent via Western's email account. The instructor sets and follows a clear contact/office hour policy for students at the beginning of the course.

General Guidelines for Student Conduct Online

The Western University Code of Student Conduct also applies to online environments and communication. It is expected that all students conduct themselves in a professional and respectful manner while in online learning environments.

- **Respect for Others**. Statements and actions that would be inappropriate in a traditional classroom setting are also inappropriate in an online classroom. Respect the rights of others to hold different opinions and disagree or debate with them in civil ways.
- **Tone.** Read your comments aloud before posting and be mindful of how it may sound to others reading it. Ask for clarification before making judgments and before reacting. Humor and sarcasm can easily be misunderstood in an online environment. Understand that classmates may disagree, and that exposure to different opinions is part of the learning experience.
- **Academic Writing and Netiquette.** Although communication online tends to be less formal than other forms of academic writing, consider that you are always writing within a university context. As such, ensure that your writing is clear, accurate, succinct, and grammatically correct. Avoid sweeping generalizations. Back up your stated opinions with facts and reliable sources. Review all discussion postings before posting your own to, where appropriate, prevent redundancy. Be aware that typing in all capital letters is interpreted as shouting. Instructors provide students with information about writing expectations online, at the beginning of the course.
- **Class Participation.** Recognize that different people participate online in different ways. Some will prefer to read and reflect on the communication before jumping into it. Be patient with those who may appear "slower" to respond. Instructors communicate their expectations about the frequency, quality, and timeliness of online class participation, and the consequences for failure to participate, at the beginning of the course. More information about Western Education's Class Attendance Policy is available on its policies page.

Live Stream Lecture Etiquette

- **Avoid interrupting the class**. Limit background noise and distractions, try to enter the session on time, and keep your microphone muted when you are not speaking.
- **Choose an appropriate workspace.** While we recognize this may be difficult, please try to find a quiet, professional space in your home where you can join the class. If your only option is not as professional as you would like (e.g., your bedroom), blurring or Zoom backgrounds can come in handy to maintain your privacy and professionalism.
- **Decorum in the chat.** Please refrain from using the chat for conversations and topics outside the scope of the class and, where possible, avoid repeating questions that other students have already asked.
- **Participation etiquette.** As a general rule, raise your hand and wait to be invited to speak by the instructor, unless other discussion norms have been outlined at the beginning of the course or session.

- **Review the University's Privacy and Zoom guidelines.** For more information on the University's expectations for Zoom etiquette, please review the [Privacy and Zoom Guidelines.](#)

What Constitutes Unacceptable Behaviour?

It is important to have a basic understanding of the policies that inform the University's stance on issues that could be considered misconduct, [harassment](#) or violence. Please familiarize yourself with Western's [Non-Discrimination and Harassment Policy](#) and [Gender Based and Sexual Violence Policy](#), including the related examples below:

Code-based Harassment involves referring to or communicating with an individual or group in an unwelcome way based on a protected ground: race, ancestry, place of origin, colour, ethnic origin, citizenship, creed, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, age, record of offences, marital status, family status or disability

Examples:

- Referencing a stereotype when describing a teacher or classmate.
- Using homophobic language in posts or messages.
- Addressing someone by a real or perceived identity they hold.

Sexual Harassment involves making unwanted remarks on the basis of sex, gender identity, gender expression or sexual orientation. Usually present is a pattern of repeated behaviours such as offensive jokes, comments, display of inappropriate materials, or stereotyping; though a single serious incident can also be considered harassment.

Examples:

- Making sexual comments about a classmate.
- Perpetuating sexual stereotypes about sexual and gender minorities, such as about women.
- Posting sexual images or making lewd or sexual gestures while on-camera.
- Making sexual advances towards a classmate.

Personal Harassment includes any behaviour which, while not related to a protected ground, results in an intimidating, demeaning or hostile environment. It can include hostile or offensive comments, or it could mean intimidating or demeaning an individual or group. Personal harassment creates an uncivil, uncomfortable and unsafe learning environment for others and can distract people from their studies.

Examples:

- Commenting on an individual's physical appearance.
- Making fun of someone's voice.
- Sending irritated or angry messages, such as in all caps, to someone.
- Making negative comments that express resentment and/or suspicion.
- Using profanity directed at another person in a derogatory manner.

- Continuing to message someone after they have indicated they do not want to communicate with you.

Gender Based and Sexual Violence is any sexual act or act targeting a person's sexuality, gender identity or gender expression, whether the act is physical or psychological in nature, that is committed, threatened or attempted against a person without the person's consent, and includes sexual assault, sexual harassment, stalking, indecent exposure, voyeurism, cyber harassment and sexual exploitation.

Examples:

- Sharing pornographic images to a class (i.e.: via "zoom bombing").

If you have experienced gender-based and sexual violence there are resources are available to you: [Western campus.](#)

Reporting Inappropriate Content in a Class Setting

If you witness disruptive or disrespectful behaviour in your online classroom and it affects your own learning or you get the feeling that it may be impacting the welfare or learning of others, here are some approaches that you can take.

- **Check-in with affected persons.** If one of your peers is targeted by inappropriate behaviour, check to see whether they're okay or in need of support. If you feel comfortable, let them know about options for reporting and/or getting help.
- **Set boundaries.** You have the right to feel comfortable and safe among your peers at the University. Set boundaries for what kinds of behaviour you are comfortable with, and what you're not. Communicate those boundaries to others.
- **Reach out.** Depending on your relationship with the person being disruptive, you could explain to them that their behavior is distracting, hurtful, or inappropriate, and ask them to stop. Sometimes a conversation with a peer is all it takes for someone to realize it's not okay. Reaching out directly gives them a chance to explain what they mean and gives you a chance to come to an understanding.
- **Document.** If the behavior is ongoing, unknown to the instructor and/or would require evidence to prove, take screenshots and/or make a note about what you witnessed.
- **Report the incident** to the moderator, or instructor. Alternatively, you can report the comment using the software's built-in reporting process. Complaints regarding the student code of conduct should be submitted to the Office of the Associate Vice-President (Student Experience) by emailing studentconduct@uwo.ca. You can report discrimination and harassment to the Human Rights office using the [online form](#) or email the Human Rights Office at humanrights@uwo.ca
- **Remove yourself** from the situation by choosing not to reply or engage with the persons who are disrupting your learning. If possible, leave the discussion group, breakout room or chat and send an email to the moderator, or instructor explaining why you left. Ask the host or co-host of the meeting, to mute the disruptive or disrespectful user or disable their screen, or to temporarily disable all chat, video and other interactive functions such as sharing the screen or presenting, if the platform allows.

Resources

We understand that exposure to disruptive or disrespectful experiences can be quite difficult and encourage any student who needs to, to reach out for support. Should your personal safety or well-being be at risk, and you need immediate support, contact Campus Safety: Email Campus Safety and Emergency Services or call extension 83300 or call 911.

Well-Being Supports

Students: available through the Student Support and Case Management office.

Employees: Employee Assistance Program (EAP) offers 24 hour help or read about other resources and services.

Student Support & Case Management

General Inquiries:
https://www.uwo.ca/health/student_support/index.html
519-661-2111 ext. 89152
sscm@uwo.ca

For concerns about students who need support navigating resources:
student.case.manager@uwo.ca

For concerns about gender-based violence & survivor support:
519-661-3568
support@uwo.ca

For concerns about a disruptive student or to resolve student conduct concerns:
519-661-2111 ext. 87306
studentconduct@uwo.ca

Office of the Ombudsperson

Western Student Services,
Room 3135, Third Floor
(519) 661-3573
ombuds@uwo.ca

Western Health & Wellness

Health & Wellness
Thames Hall
Tel: (519) 661-3030
health@uwo.ca

Policies and Information

Western Education Program Policies

https://www.edu.uwo.ca/CSW/my-program/graduate-degrees/policies.html

Western Center for Teaching and Learning Learner Orientation

https://teaching.uwo.ca/elearning/online_learner_orientation/communicating_effectively_online.html

Western University Student Code of Conduct

https://studentexperience.uwo.ca/student_experience/studentconduct.html

code.pdf (uwo.ca)

Guidelines on Access to Information and Protection of Privacy

https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/policies_procedures/section1/mapp123.pdf

Code of Behaviour for Use of Computing, Information and Technology Resources

https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/policies_procedures/section1/mapp113.pdf

Privacy and Zoom

https://wts.uwo.ca/zoom/privacy_considerations/privacy_and_zoom.html

References

Modified from documents posted by the Toronto District School Board, Carleton University, and University of Calgary