

Code of Online Conduct

Western University provides online resources for use by instructors, staff, and students. Online resources include all university virtual learning environments (VLEs), web pages, social media applications, and other software that can be accessed through a computer or telecommunications network.

All policies, procedures, codes of behaviour, and rules of Western University apply to those using online systems and resources. On behalf of the university, the Faculty of Education takes appropriate measures to ensure the security and safety of information that may be contained by its facilities.

The “Code of Online Conduct” has been prepared concerning 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.

1. **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, origin, religion, age, sexual orientation, marital status, etc.).

Please be informed that information on Western’s Learning Management System (LMS), Sakai, as well as its ePortfolio system, Mahara, are stored on a secured server on Western’s campus. Students are not required to post personal information (as defined by FIPPA) that they do not wish to share in these locations. Personal information that is voluntarily disclosed by students will not be shared on the internet, with employers, or with other members of Western. Never reveal your Western password to anyone.

2. **Safety of Others:** Respect the privacy of your classmates and the information that they share in class. Never share information about or a picture of another person or their property unless you have their prior consent. In the case of minors, explicit permission must be given by their parents or guardians.
3. **Respect:** Always be respectful of each other. Keep in mind that you are taking a university class. Statements and actions that would be inappropriate in a traditional classroom are also inappropriate in an online classroom.
4. **Online Communication:** In an online or hybrid course, online class interaction takes place through the mediation of technology. It is the responsibility of 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 should set and follow a clear contact/office hour policy for students at the beginning of the course.
5. **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 prevent redundancy. Be aware that typing in all capital letters indicates shouting. The instructor should provide students with information about writing expectations online.

6. **Tone:** Review your tone before sending a message online. Ask for clarification before making judgments, and seek clarification 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. When reacting to another person's message, address the ideas and issues explicitly, not the person. Keep the tone of your writing respectful.
7. **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 “slow” to respond. Instructors should 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 participation course policy is available on its policies page.
8. **Plagiarism/Copyright Infringement/Cheating:** Do not plagiarize or cheat. Taking the ideas, writings, images, or media of others and present them as if they were your own is a prohibited activity. Under copyright laws, all information remains the property of the creator(s)/author(s) and therefore permission is required for its use. The use of copyright materials without permission can result in legal action.
9. **Reporting:** Report any message or request you receive that contains inappropriate information or statements.

Dealing with Issues

Occasionally, online behaviour can appear so disrespectful and even hostile that it requires attention and follow up. For example, *flaming*, which can be described as sending or posting inflammatory or confrontational exchanges via technology, can lead to broken trust and complete communication breakdown. If you are involved with or hear about such activities, let your instructor know about problems right away so that the right resources can be called upon to help. Address issues of privacy and safety sooner rather than later. Inappropriate activities by students, instructors, and staff may result in disciplinary action that may include legal action and/or involvement with the police.

More on Policies

Please see the [Western Education Program Policies](#), [SGPS Regulations](#), [University Secretariat General Policies](#), [Western’s Information and Privacy Office](#), and [Western University’s Code of Student Conduct](#), and [Copyright@Western](#) for more information.