



Mobile Phone Policy – Student Use

Personal mobile phone use

In line with the Victorian Ministerial Policy issued by the Minister for Education (2020), student personal mobile phones must not be used at Damascus College during school hours, including lunchtime and recess, unless an exemption has been granted by the House Leader or a member of the Leadership Team.

Where a student has been granted an exemption, the student must use their mobile phone for the purpose for which the exemption was granted, and in a safe, ethical and responsible manner.

PURPOSE

Damascus College is committed to providing a safe and respectful learning environment. This student use guideline outlines expectations relating to using mobile phones at Damascus College.

SCOPE

This policy applies to all students at Damascus College and their personal mobile phones brought onto school premises during school hours (8.55am-3.18pm), including recess and lunchtime.

DEFINITIONS

For the purpose of this policy, a mobile phone is a telephone with access to a cellular (telecommunication) system, with or without a physical connection to a network.

RATIONALE

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

At Damascus College:

- Students who choose to bring mobile phones to school must have them switched off and securely stored in their locker during school hours.
- As per Ministerial Policy, exemptions to this may be applied if certain conditions are met (see below for further information).
- When emergencies occur, parents or carers should reach their student by calling the school's office.

Secure storage

Mobile phones owned by students at Damascus College are considered valuable items and are brought to school at the owner's (student's or parent/carer's) risk. The College has no responsibility for phones that are damaged, misplaced or taken.

Please note that Damascus College does not have accident insurance for accidental property damage or theft. Students are encouraged not to bring a mobile phone to school unless there is a compelling reason to do so.

Damascus College provides all students with a locker and a combination lock to ensure that a device that is brought to school can be securely locked away.



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Enforcement

Students who use their personal mobile phones inappropriately at Damascus College may be issued with consequences consistent with our school's restorative process procedures. This process acknowledges the harm as a result of not adhering to school's expectations.

The use of mobile phones at Damascus College is not permitted during school hours (this may include camps, excursions and extracurricular activities), unless an exemption has been granted. This is to ensure mobile phones are not used:

- in any way that disrupts the learning of others
- to send inappropriate, harassing or threatening messages or phone calls
- to engage in inappropriate social media use
- to capture video or images of people, including students, teachers and members of the school community without their permission
- to capture video or images in the school toilets, changing rooms, swimming pools and gyms and during exams and assessments

Note: Parents have the option to report inappropriate use of mobile phone to Victoria Police. Victoria's anti-bullying legislation, known as Brodie's Law, commenced in June 2011 and made serious bullying a crime punishable by up to 10 years in jail.

Breaches of Mobile Phone Agreement.

In line with Restorative Practice processes a harm minimisation approach will guide student breaches of mobile phone use. A student who fails to hand in their phone at the request of the staff member would be subject to the consequences as outlined in the Students Behaviour Management Policy.

The First Breach will require students to turn off their phones and hand their phone into student reception at the request of the teacher. An SMS will be sent from the College notifying parents/carers of this breach. The phone is then to be collected by the student at the end of the day from the student reception area. This will be subsequently recorded in student profile.

The Second Breach requires students to turn off their phones and hand the phone to student reception. An SMS will be sent from the college indicating that the phone must be collected by the parent/carer. If unable to collect the phone, parents /carers are required to call the school and arrangements will be made with a House Leader / House Leader Assistant or member of Leadership.

Subsequent breaches will also be discussed at this time.

Parents will be notified of breaches of this agreement through a letter sent through the Parent Access Module (PAM) of SIMON.



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Exemptions

Exemptions to the policy:

- may be applied during school hours if certain conditions are met, specifically, Health and wellbeing-related exemptions; and Exemptions related to managing risk when students are offsite.
- can be granted by the principal, or by the teacher for that class, in accordance with the Department's Mobile Phones Policy.

The three categories of exemptions allowed under the Department's Mobile Phones Policy are:

1. Learning-related exemptions

Specific exemption	Documentation
For specific learning activities (class-based exemption)	Application form submitted to the Assistant Principal of Teaching and Learning.
For students for whom a reasonable adjustment to a learning program is needed because of a disability or learning difficulty	Individual Learning Plan

2 Health and wellbeing-related exemptions

Specific exemption	Documentation
Students with a diagnosed health condition	Individual Plan supported by House Leader or Assistant Principal

3. Exemptions related to managing risk when students are offsite

Specific exemption	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

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

Camps, excursions and extracurricular activities

Damascus College 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 travelling to and from school.



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Associated Documents

- Ministerial policy formally issued by the Minister for Education under section 5.2.1(2)(b) of the Education and Training Reform Act 2006 (Vic).

