

UQ Respect

Guidelines for safe and respectful online engagement

About these guidelines

The purpose of these guidelines is to ensure we build a safe and respectful community online as well as offline. When you are interacting with someone via social media, forums or other online platforms it is important to be aware of your own language and behaviour as well as recognising when yourself or others are being mistreated online. This document will give you guidelines on how to interact respectfully and safely online as well as tips and resources on how to be an ethical bystander and how to seek support and report incidents.

Being respectful

Treat others how you would like to be treated

This may sound obvious, but it's such an important thing to remember. Try to put yourself in another person's shoes and think about how you would feel receiving the comment or seeing the post before you put it out there!

Treat people online the same way you would treat them face-to-face

When we are online it can be easy to forget that the people we are interacting with are humans as well, with feelings and emotions. [Research](#) has shown that the sense of anonymity and also the lack of eye contact makes it easier for people to be rude and disrespectful online. It's not just 'trolls' and 'haters', many of us can fall into this without realising it. And, this behaviour has a real impact on the receiver's mental health.

Acknowledge and accept others' ideas

The online world provides us with a wealth of knowledge and opportunities to share ideas without geographic barriers. We must remember that the people we are interacting with online (peers that we know or people from across the world) will have different ideas and that is OK. Make a point to be kind and respectful in your comments—even if you disagree with someone. Sometimes when we are online we feel the need to

voice our opinion on everything, all the time. But it's really important to allow space for other voices, be open to learning, and be careful not to spread misinformation or 'hate'. Be mindful of 'call-out-culture' and the harm it can cause. While you might intend to hold someone accountable for certain actions, public humiliation is not the right way to go about it.

Acknowledge and accept others' background, culture, religion, sexuality and gender

At UQ, we strive to ensure our learning, working and research environments are respectful, safe and inclusive for all members of our community. The diversity of our community is our greatest strength and must ensure all members of our community are treated respectfully.

Understand the purpose of the online platform you are interacting on and respect the boundaries of relationships you build there

An online study group is about developing skills and knowledge related to your courses with your peers. Virtual Village chat groups are designed to connect students at UQ who have similar interests or hobbies. Online dating apps and websites are designed for making more social and intimate connections. Remember where you are interacting and respect the boundaries of that space and the relationships developed in it!

Ensure consent in all of your online interactions

Making multiple, unwanted contact, sending someone unwanted intimate images, asking inappropriate questions and sending abusive or derogatory messages can be considered harassment. We need to be respectful of people's autonomy and space online and make sure to read the signs that someone is not consenting to being contacted, such as not responding to your messages. Consent is just as important online as face-to-face.

Respect others' trust and confidentiality

Communications online should be treated with the same care and respect as face-to-face communications. If someone tells you something or shares something with you in confidence, make sure to treat it as such! Remember, sharing intimate images of people without their consent is against the law.

Bullying, harassment and stalking

Just like in the non-virtual world, bullying, harassment and stalking in online spaces are harmful and against the law. Bullying, harassment and discrimination are never OK, at UQ or in wider society.

What to do if someone is NOT respectful to you

- If you feel comfortable, you can tell the person that their behaviour is inappropriate and not acceptable. Or ask them not to contact you.

- Block them. Most platforms allow you to 'block' someone so they can no longer interact with you or your content. Make sure to check your [privacy settings](#).
- If the behaviour continues or you feel unable to respond yourself, seek help. Virtual Village volunteers are there to help you, connect with peers who can support you and/or report the behaviour to [the University](#) and/or the [e-Safety Commissioner](#).
- For information on support and reporting of online sexual misconduct (sexual assault or sexual harassment) visit the [UQ Respect Website](#).
- For support reporting bullying, harassment or discrimination contact a [Discrimination and Harassment Contact Officer](#).

Being an ethical bystander online

We all have a responsibility to create safe and respectful online spaces. If you see something that is not right or someone being treated disrespectfully, remember the 5 Ds of ethical bystanding:

- Distract: Change the subject, ignore the comment and shift the direction of the conversation.
- Direct: Tell the person what they have said is not OK.
- Delegate: Ask someone in a position of authority for help.
- Delay: Check in with the person who was the target.
- Document: Report to UQ or relevant platform (e.g. Facebook)

Visit the [UQ Respect Website](#) for more information and tips on being an ethical bystander.

More information

[UQ Guidelines for Effective Online Communication and Etiquette](#)

[UQ Student Charter](#)

[E-Safety Commissioner Information on Building Your Psychological Armour](#)

[E-Safety Commissioner Online Toolkit for University Students](#)

[E-Safety Commissioner Reporting Information](#)

For further details, please contact:

<https://respect.uq.edu.au>

