



Learner Mobile Phone Policy

Policy Number:

085-2026

Academic Year:

2025/2026 onwards

Target Audience:

All Staff / All Students

Summary of Contents:

This policy sets clear expectations for the acceptable student use of mobile phones and digital devices

Enquiries

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CMT: 2 April 2026

Lead GB Committee: Education Committee

Governing Body Approval:

Related Documents:

Student and Trainee Performance, Behaviour and Disciplinary Management SOP

Appropriate Student Handbooks

Student Code of Conduct

Conduct of Examinations SOP

Date of Equality of Opportunity and Good Relations Screening (Section 75):

14th April 2026

Date of Last Accessibility Screening:



Contents

1.0	CHANGE HISTORY	1
2.0	INTRODUCTION	1
3.0	SCOPE	1
4.0	ACCEPTABLE USE	1
5.0	MOBILE PHONES IN THE CLASSROOM OR OTHER LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS	2
6.0	USE OF MOBILE PHONES WITHIN THE WIDER COLLEGE ENVIRONMENT	3
7.0	MOBILE DEVICES, SOCIAL MEDIA AND COMMUNICATIONS WITH OTHERS.....	3
8.0	CONSEQUENCE FOR NON-COMPLIANCE.....	4
9.0	RESPONSIBLE OWNER	4
10.0	COMMUNICATION PLAN.....	4
11.0	REVIEW.....	4
	APPENDIX 1: DOCUMENT CHANGE HISTORY	5

1.0 Change History

Changes to this SOP are documented in Appendix 1 of this document. When reading electronic copies of this document, [you can click here to view the change history](#).

2.0 Introduction

- 2.1 The use of mobile phone technology presents an opportunity to enhance the student learning experience. However acceptable usage must be clearly defined to help maintain a positive and productive learning environment free from disruption and in which the safety and welfare of learners and staff are protected.

This policy also recognises that the appropriate use of mobile phones and other similar devices can support often referred to as technology enhanced learning (TEL).

- 2.2 This policy provides guidance to staff and students regarding the use of mobile phones and similar technology in the context of their participation in learning activities at SERC. It should be read in conjunction with the following:

- Student and Trainee Performance, Behaviour and Disciplinary Management SOP
- Appropriate Student Handbook
- Student Code of Conduct
- Conduct of Examinations SOP

- 2.3 The College is committed to promoting equality of opportunity and good relations in accordance with Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1988. This policy should be interpreted in a manner consistent with the aforementioned legislation.

3.0 Scope

- 3.1 All learners using a personal mobile phone within the College.

4.0 Acceptable Use

- 4.1 The majority of SERC's learners have access to a modern smart phone. Where a learner does have access to such a device there are many circumstances in which the device can be useful in supporting learning, and the College is keen that learners avail of such technology in this way when it is appropriate and possible.

- 4.2 In developing this policy it should be noted that SERC does not require all learners to have access to a modern mobile phone, smart phone or other similar device. Where a learner does not have or is unable to use a mobile phone other arrangements will be made to ensure that they are not disadvantaged as they learn at SERC.

Learners bring mobile phones to college at their own risk, and the college is not liable for any loss, theft or damage.

5.0 Mobile Phones in the Classroom or other learning Environments

5.1 Mobile phone usage does enable learners to:

- Use 2 factor authentication,
- Receive communications from tutors through Teams or SMS messages from the College
- Participate in online activities.
- Record evidence for portfolios, assignments and projects
- Have access to calculators, timers, translations and other practical functions
- Monitor health related issues eg blood sugars
- Avail of a reasonable adjustment where there is a support need
- Remain contactable to assist with caring responsibilities.

5.2 To ensure that the use of mobile phones remains both valid and appropriate within the classroom environment SERCs Learner Mobile Phone Policy requires staff to, at the commencement of their classes at the beginning of the academic year (or otherwise) to agree appropriate arrangements for the use of phones during their class with the learners.

It is expected that the agreement will reflect the type and nature of the activities of that class and the needs of those learners. Some of the suggestions for inclusion in this agreement may be:

- A complete ban
- A ban during certain activities eg in the kitchen, gym, workshop or laboratory
- No access during certain teaching activities / times
- Access when doing certain tasks eg recording data, using the calculator
- Facilitating an individual learner to have access to their phone eg for medical or caring reasons.
- Limited access for certain purposes eg for taking pictures of evidence for a portfolio.

This is not an exhaustive list and a class agreement may include a range of points to reflect the different activities that will take place during the course of the classes. This agreement with a class should also set out the expected etiquette around phone usage (as agreed) eg keeping phone on silent, call taking etc.

5.3 Teaching staff will enforce their agreement with their class and where necessary may use the Student Performance Management and Disciplinary SOP.

6.0 Use of Mobile Phones within the wider College Environment

6.1 General

Learners may use mobile devices outside teaching areas and Libraries; however usage must remain respectful and non-disruptive.

Mobile phones must be kept on silent within the college Libraries. Calls should not be answered or made to ensure there is no disruption to other users.

The recording and / or photography of staff, learners or visitors without permission is strictly prohibited. Where recording / photography is necessary for assessment purposes, permission must be obtained from those being recorded (Data Protection Act, 2018 UK GDPR). Where there is in breach of the law, the College is obliged, to report such instances to the PSNI.

Learners must not use mobile phones to communicate any material of an obscene nature or material that is likely to cause offence to others.

The use of a mobile phone to bully or harass others is a breach of the learner Code of Conduct and is a disciplinary offence. Offences of this nature will be addressed through the Student Performance, Behaviour and Disciplinary Management SOP

6.2 Examinations

The use of mobile phones or any other web-enabled smart devices (including smartwatches, earphones or smart glasses) is strictly prohibited in any examination room. Possession of unauthorised material or devices is a breach of regulations and may result in disqualification and disciplinary action. Unless there is a specific reason eg medical – blood sugar monitoring learners should not bring mobile phones into examinations. **Where there is a medical reason for having a phone in an examination this needs to be discussed with the examinations department at least 4 weeks prior to the examination taking place.** The invigilators will arrange a suitable box for phones to be stored during an examination. This may be taken outside of the examination room to prevent any disruption.

7.0 Mobile Devices, Social Media and Communications with others

7.1 SERC holds Individual learners responsible for the proper and safe use of their phone, including the sharing of posts and other information on Social Media and other platforms. Where necessary SERC engage with PSNI where mobile phone use has caused a safeguarding, bullying or harassment concern.

It is the learner's responsibility to read and act in accordance with the rules and guidelines set out by individual social media sites.

However, in addition to these rules, SERC require that learners:

- Should not use social media websites to criticise the College, or any staff members, learners or third parties.
- Should not use social media websites to abuse, harass staff members, learners or any other third parties.
- Must not post any comment, or image that would bring the College into disrepute, or give cause for a third party to consider taking legal action

- Must not place information pertaining to, or upload image(s) of college staff or other learners to any web site without the prior consent being obtained from the staff and student member(s) in question.

- 7.2 All learners (and staff) should note that the line between Academic, Professional and Personal use of social media is not always clear and personal use can have an impact in the College and on the studies of others. Where necessary the college reserves the right to address concerns relating to this through its disciplinary or other legal processes if necessary.
- 7.3 Whilst the primary focus for this policy relates to learner mobile phone usage, staff should also adhere to the principles within it and model the behaviours expected from learners. Additionally, staff should refrain from taking calls, sending and/or receiving messages or internet browsing on their mobile phone during timetabled sessions. Exceptions can be made for emergencies or situations outside their control.

8.0 Consequence for non-compliance

- 8.1 Where a learner is found to be in breach of this policy it may lead to disciplinary action being taken. The process relating to disciplinary action is defined within the Student Performance, Behaviour and Disciplinary Management SOP.

9.0 Responsible Owner

- 9.1 It is the responsibility of Deputy Principal Curriculum to ensure that this policy is implemented, adhered to and reviewed.

10.0 Communication Plan

- 10.1 This Policy will be uploaded to the College intranet and referred to in staff and student inductions, training and learner tutorial sessions.

11.0 Review

- 11.1 This Policy will be reviewed annually, or when the need for change has been identified.

Appendix 1: Document Change History

Version	Date	Change Detail
1.0	March 2026	Policy created