

**Distance and Remote Teaching and Learning Policy**

Athlone Community College have devised a new Distance Learning Policy to reflect the changed circumstances brought about by Covid-19 and the significant increase in the use of technology to continue learning. This policy does not introduce any new concepts, rather, it specifically outlines the various applications used for the delivery of online classes remotely. The purpose of the policy is to provide guidance to teachers, students and parents regarding the use of technology when learning takes place other than in school.

**Introduction**

This document sets out the policy of the school in respect of use of technology for distance or remote teaching and learning during the current Coronavirus pandemic. It does not replace our AUP policy or Mobile Phone policy but is an important addition to digital learning.

The policy is prepared in accordance with the provisions of the Department of Education and the relevant sections of:-

1. The Education Act 1998,
2. The Education Welfare Act 2000
3. Equal Status Acts 2000
4. Education for Persons with Special Ed Needs Act 2004
5. Disability Act 2005
6. Children First 2017
7. GDPR

**Scope of this Policy**

This policy informs best practice for remote learning and teaching and the use of online learning platforms. It should be understood in tandem with the school Mission statement, Code of Behaviour, Anti-Bullying policy and other related policies.

Our primary obligation is for the welfare of students in the school. This policy, therefore, seeks to ensure that engagement with remote learning is safe for all learners under the Child Protection Policy and that their data is protected under GDPR legislation.

The primary Platform in use in the school is Microsoft Office. All students must use their acc@lwetb.ie athlone community college account to log in. Students are not to use any other account under any circumstances for the purposes of Distance eLearning within the College. This may change in time in response to evolving needs but the policy and instructions herein will remain in place irrespective of the platform being used.

The list of applications that will be used for distance learning will primarily be:

* Office365, incorporating:
  + Microsoft Outlook (e-mail)
  + Microsoft Teams
  + Microsoft OneNote
  + Microsoft Forms
  + Microsoft Stream
* Microsoft Teams – for live online classes.

There may be some additional applications that teachers may use, and the teacher will provide the student with the information required to access them.

**eLearning Approach**

eLearning will take what is known as a blended approach and some teachers may use different methods more than another teacher. For example:

* Some teachers may use regular live classes while others may not
* Teachers are advised to link with their students on a daily basis and check and correct the work at least three times per week – times to be pre-arranged.
* Teachers may also use pre-recorded instructive You Tube videos.

In all cases the primary aim is to cover the required curriculum for their specific subject. The teacher will decide the most effective method to use to achieve this aim. Students should get in touch with their teacher right away if they are having difficulty with any aspect of their subject or if they are finding the workload unmanageable.

**Everyone’s Responsibilities while partaking in eLearning**

For staff and teachers:

* Teachers have overall control of the online interaction of their class
* Disruptive students will be removed in order to allow those who wish to partake a fair chance to do so. Repeatedly disruptive students may receive a temporary ban from all online access.
* Teachers will do their utmost to be available at the identified time on their timetable – this may be via a Microsoft Teams live video, through Teams chat or by e-mail.

For students:

* You are to communicate through your acc@ lwetb.ie account only. The use of any other account or e-mail address or chat function is expressly discouraged unless in exceptional circumstances.
* Do not engage in communications with any account other than an acc@lwetb.ie account and report any such activity to your teacher or year-head’s at acc.lwetb.ie account.
* You must always be civil and respectful to your teachers and fellow students.
* Similar to class conducted in real time students must be on time for online classes. A five minute ‘grace period’ is allowed at the beginning of class to enable all students to log in. If students are trying to log in after this time it is disruptive of teaching in the same manner as students arriving late for normal class. Persistent lateness will result in students not being admitted to on-line classes.
* Recording or forwarding any content within a Teams group is expressly forbidden. This includes videos, recordings, worksheets, exam papers, answers, solutions, notes or Team links – to anyone else without the permission of the creator of that content. Breaches will be dealt with under the Code of Behaviour and appropriate sanctions will apply.
* Students are not allowed share their link to join class with any other person.
* You understand that all your online activity is recorded. This includes anything you send or say via e-mail, Teams, and OneNote, and whether you are checking regularly for assigned work.

For parents:

* You should ensure that your child is checking in regularly for assigned work
* Where live classes are being run you should ensure your son/daughter is in an area of the house that is quiet and free from distractions. Please be mindful of Child Protection Guidelines, for example, bedrooms should never be used for live classes
* Live online classes should be viewed by your son/daughter only.

**Online Classes**

Teachers may deliver some of the course using Microsoft Teams. This will use varying combinations of audio, video, virtual whiteboards and screencasts.

In the use of Microsoft Teams:

* Students must always follow the direction of their teacher just as in the classroom.
* Students are not to turn on their video at any time without the permission of the teacher.
* Students are not to turn on their microphone unless the teacher invites them to do so. In any case, all microphones should be on mute when a person is not speaking to avoid distracting background noise being broadcast to everyone.
* A link is intended for the student only. The teacher will decide who should receive the link. Do not forward any link to anyone else.
* Sessions may be recorded by the teacher and these recordings may be made available by the teacher to the class to watch back again later.  This recording includes any video, screenshares, whiteboards and audio from the class.
* Only the teacher is allowed record a session. No-one else is permitted to record.
* Teachers when working remotely will try to communicate online during normal working hours and will endeavour not to communicate with students outside of these hours. However, we appreciate that everyone’s circumstance is different and we have to be as accommodating to all members of our school community as we can.
* Parents and students need to be aware that teachers may have to send material/ assignments outside of regular school opening hours. This does not mean there is an expectation on the student to begin work at the time it is received.

Likewise, there is never an expectation on the teacher to have to correct or comment on work sent on Teams outside of normal school hours. Whilst it might suit teachers or students to communicate outside of normal working hours, it is essential that everyone agrees that responses or actions outside of normal working hours are not required.

* We would urge all members of the school community to turn off notifications outside of their learning/working hours.
* Provision for SEN students, will be considered a priority and all efforts to engage with SEN students will be made – SNA’s will also link directly with the students in their care when using Remote Learning methodologies
* Irrespective of what time a student and/ or teacher is on Teams i.e. whether the teacher is online giving a tutorial or not- the moment a student logs onto Teams they must abide by the school rules and the rules will be implemented if and when necessary.
* Students cannot choose to leave a Team once a teacher has created one
* The material created by the teacher on Teams is the property of the teacher and students do not have permission to share to others outside of the Team unless given permission to do so. Recordings should not be made of any online tutorial unless with explicit permission from the teacher. In this instance, it is of utmost importance that any such recordings are not shared.
* Teachers may choose to conduct live classes. This will be done using Microsoft Teams. We would like to avoid the scenario of students being compelled to disable their webcams and/or muting their audio. In order to avoid this scenario, we are using a high trust model. Teachers will trust students to behave appropriately online, as they would in their real classroom.
* Students’ attire must be suitable as must their Profile, pictures/logos etc. Students will not record the class unless with the prior permission of the teacher conducting the live online class. If a recording is made with the permission of the teacher, it cannot be shared with anyone outside of the class.
* Most Teams will be whole class groups but this may vary. When students are invited onto and put into a Team it is the exact same as being in the classroom and being with a class group. They have a teacher and the school’s same rules continue to apply.
* A teacher will only correspond to a student who is signed up to the correct Platform, unless alternatives have been agreed in advance with both parties.
* Social media sites e.g. Facebook, Snapchat, WhatsApp etc, to communicate with students is never permissible and teachers have been advised accordingly. Social media may be used by teachers to demonstrate examples of good work to parents and the wider school community, but will not be used for the conduct of teaching and learning. Any such activity will only be on the official school social media account (Facebook and Twitter). All student names on student work should be redacted.
* Other Teams created by students themselves within a Team created by the teacher is not permitted.
* Any behaviour or language deemed inappropriate during school applies online and after established school times. The consequences for such behaviour will be the same as if the student was in school as they are involved in prescribed school work, on a school created platform using a school log-in and which has been directed by school personnel.
* Any language directed towards a fellow student or teacher that is very aggressive/ threatening or offensive may also be reported to the Gardaí or TUSLA or both.
* The criteria for mandated Child Protection reporting remains the same as if the child was being taught in school.
* As per all matters pertaining to our school’s Code of Behaviour, if a student acts in a fashion that is contrary to our Code’s expectations, they may receive a sanction and/or Suspension/ recommendation to the Board of Management for Permanent Exclusion.

**Data Privacy Statement**

Our Distance Learning Policy operates in addition to the Internet Acceptable Usage Policy (AUP) and College Privacy Policy. For clarity, we will outline aspects specific to Distance Learning but this should be read alongside our existing policies mentioned above.

**What we retain:**

* Login activity, specifically, the last time a student logged in to their Office365 account
* Within Teams and OneNote, the date and time of if/when a student views any assignments or OneNote notebooks set for them and when they submit any work for same
* In live classes using Microsoft Teams, all audio, video, whiteboard, annotations and screenshare activity of both teacher and participants (audio/video is not recorded if the student is on mute and the video is not enabled).

**Why we retain it:**

* To assist us in making sure students are engaging in learning sufficiently and in good time
* To assist us in generating appropriate and relevant feedback to parents on progress
* To provide revision materials by means of replying topics covered in a live class, and to ensure those who might be unable to attend live classes can still cover the same content as the rest of the class
* To provide a record of activity in the event of a disciplinary or other issue arising during a live class.

**Where we retain it:**

* All recordings are kept within the College’s own systems which requires a valid Athlone Community College login to access
* The College’s own systems are configured so that all data resides within an EU country only, which in the case of Office365, is Ireland.

**How long we retain it for:**

* Ordinarily this is cleared at the end of each exam session, i.e. at the end of 3rd Year and at the end of 6th Year. In any case, activity and content will not be retained beyond the students exit from the College, either through early exit or through graduation.

**Review**

This policy will be reviewed annually commencing January 2022.