Digital Learning Charter

GMIT
INSTITIÚID TEICNEOLAÍOCHTA NA GAILLIMHE-MAIGH EO
GALWAY-MAYO INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY

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Introduction

Galway-Mayo Institute of Technology (GMIT) is more than just a place of learning, it is a community.

As members of a digital learning community, staff and students have obligations to each other. These obligations are designed to enable our students to accomplish their full potential and the Institute community to flourish.

GMIT's Digital Learning Charter outlines our mutual responsibilities and provides a framework for managing our communication and behaviour in an digital world. It should be taken as a statement of our shared values rather than as a rule book. It illustrates the way in which members of GMIT staff and students should work collaboratively so that everyone can benefit. GMIT will aim to support all of our learning community to engage in a safe and responsible manner when engaging in digital learning.

The Institute and Student's Union take the Digital Learning Charter very seriously and are fully committed to upholding its principles. As the Institute develops and progresses, so too do our responsibilities as members. GMIT will review this charter regularly to ensure it reflects the ongoing needs of staff and students.

Dr Seamus Lennon, Chair of the BOLT Steering Group
Galway-Mayo Institute of Technology
September 2020

GMIT Digital Communication Principles

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These 10 principles outline the way in which GMIT staff and students should work together to support learning, research, participation and delivery in all aspects of the Institute's digital environment.

Principle 1
Professional Competence

We recognise that:

> effective digital communication skills cannot be presumed, but can be acquired and are fundamental for successful engagement in online learning and collaboration.

> the development of professional digital competence and netiquette skills have positive advantages for staff and students, and for graduates, as they seek future employment opportunities.

> students need support in developing digital professionalism and that GMIT will provide such supports as necessary.

Principle 2

Appropriate Behaviour
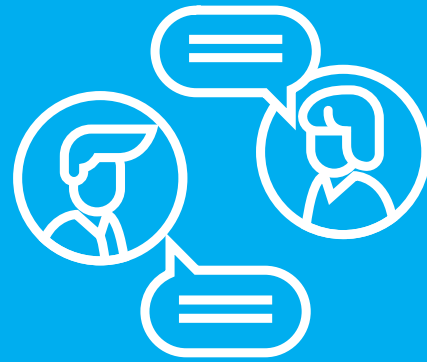
We will support each other to:

› behave with respect and courtesy when online; uphold equality, and anticipate and respond positively to different needs and circumstances.

› acknowledge and value the rights of individuals to hold different beliefs and views and be able to express them through appropriate contribution to digital discussion and academic debate.

› welcome and value diversity and understand that different people bring different ideas, knowledge and culture and that this difference enriches our interactions with each other.

Principle 3
Effective Communication
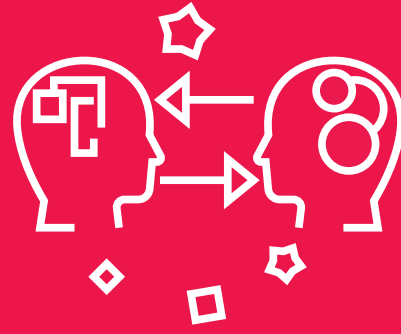
## We will endeavor to:

> encourage and support vibrant and valuable communication in online interactions with each other and adopt language, tone, style and grammar that is relevant and appropriate to the purpose of our communication.

> communicate online in a manner that is concise, well defined, appropriate, respectful, accurate and timely, underpinned by transparency and constructive dialogue.

Principle 4
Our Digital Image
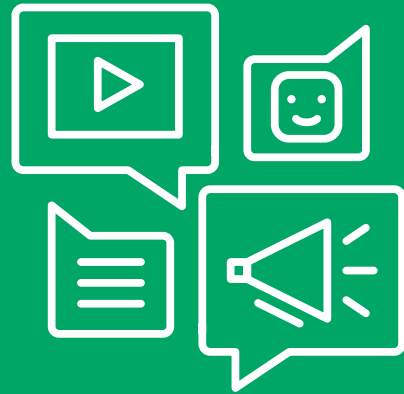
We will ensure that we:

> recognise the importance of managing our 'digital footprint' and encourage each other to foster awareness of the necessity of creating and maintaining a positive online image and how to achieve it.

> are conscious of preserving our own and others confidentiality and personal security at all times.

> are mindful of holding and protecting the reputation of GMIT and its digital learning community.

Principle 5

Freedom of Speech and Ideas

We will:

› promote open and frank exchange of ideas and advocate the basic principles of freedom of speech and thought.

› recognise and acknowledge that people have the right, within law, to express and to advocate opinions and views that others may find challenging.

› support and uphold academic freedom of inquiry as an essential pillar to the mission of the institute and principles of academia.

› not allow views to be presented that are antagonistic, aggressive, intimidating, adverse, hostile or degrading to others.

Principle 6

Dignity and Respect

We will:

› treat each other with dignity and respect, in our online interactions and exchanges, even when we disagree with each other. We will always be considerate of the impact our behavior and demeanor may have on other students and staff when online.

› recognise that good manners and online netiquette aid effective communication.

› be welcoming and inclusive and not tolerate threats, personal abuse, derogatory comments, unreasonable behavior that causes offence, discrimination, victimisation, bullying or harassment.

Principle 7

The Art of Constructive Criticism

We should be prepared:

> to receive legitimate and appropriate criticism, provided it is framed in a positive manner, based on accurate facts and materials, and is measured, balanced and appropriate in context.

> to understand that constructive criticism is an important contribution to our learning when framed within the context of improving our future contributions and submission of course materials and assignments.

> to recognise and acknowledge that it is rarely acceptable for named individuals to be criticised in public or anywhere that they have no opportunity to reply.

Principle 8

Privacy and Copyright

We will undertake to:

› respect each other's confidentiality and privacy and acknowledge that we will not share personal details or information of any kind with others without their express permission.

› not use ideas, words images, artefacts or learning assets which are expressly owned by other individuals without their express or implied permission and without giving them proper acknowledgement and attribution.

› recognise and understand that plagiarism, or activities which encourage or enable it, are a breach of the GMIT Code of Student Conduct and Plagiarism Policy and that strict sanctions apply for infringements.

Principle 9

Responsibility and Consequences

We will:

› accept responsibility, and be held accountable for our own actions and behaviour and shall always endeavour to encourage others to do so.

› respect that poor communication skills and certain behaviours may have a negative impact on the reputation of the institution, ourselves and others.

Principle 10
Moderating

We acknowledge that:

> moderators and other controllers of online chats, posts, forums or any other online communication space not mentioned here, whether they are lecturers, students, or guests, have a shared responsibility to uphold the principles as outlined in this charter.

What to Expect from Staff and Students

From Staff

› To support students academically in the digital learning environment

› To provide orientation of programmes, modules, and assessment processes

› To provide you with a digital learning environment that is safe, encourages and moderates respectful exchange of views and embraces the diversity of the student population of which you are an integral part

› To be provided with digital learning content and resources which are easily accessible and flexible so that you can take responsibility and ownership of your own online learning

› Give quality and timely feedback to assist you in your learning

› Give you clearly defined guidance of office hours and how and when it is best to make contact

› Be courteous, respectful and professional in communications

› Endeavor to create a digital learning environment that is conducive to your development and growth personally, academically and professionally

From Students

› That you take responsibility for your behaviour and conduct and at all times be respectful towards staff, your fellow students and guests in line with the Digital Communication Principles

› That you attend and take an active part in live online lectures, seminars, tutorials, meetings, laboratories

› That you access and engage with recorded (asynchronous) content, chat, posts, discussion forums etc., as prescribed by your programme of study

› That you commit to regularly checking your email, chat, posts, discussion forums, your class social media group or other relevant sources of information and ensure you are always aware of and respond to relevant communications from the Institute, School, Department or your Lecturer

› Respect any guidelines from your Lecturer about preferred channels of communication and contact times

› That you understand the consequences for the misuse of GMIT digital content and technology enhanced learning tools

› That you take the opportunity to maximise the support available to you through GMIT Student Services and other student supports to enhance your online engagement

GMIT Netiquette for Students
Guidelines for etiquette in digital teaching and learning

The following guidelines have been developed in order to encourage vibrant and open engagement, discussion and collaboration within GMIT's digital learning environment. These procedures are in place to protect GMIT students and staff and to promote a culture of mutually respectful exchanges and behaviour, where digital communication remains courteous and focused.

Recognising that not every situation can be accounted for, it is hoped that these guidelines can be used to enable students to determine the appropriate behaviour for all online interaction and engagement.

1. Setting up

- Check that your environment is suitable for participating and engaging in an online class (test your internet connection, sound, camera lighting, background, etc. before joining a class)

- Be punctual and ensure you are prepared for the class (undertake any required pre-reading, assessments etc.)

- Know that you may be asked to turn on your video so be sure to dress and behave appropriately when on camera.

- Mute your microphone unless invited by the lecturer to unmute and speak.

- Know that classes may be recorded for later viewing and that these recordings may include the capture of student discussions, debates, presentations, etc.

- Let your lecturer know if there is any reason you cannot attend an online class.

2. Behaviour

- Treat live online classes as you would a live face to face class.

- Try to ensure that your comments cannot be taken in the wrong context by posting your comments clearly and concisely when using the 'chat' function.

- Respect that the views of others may differ from yours and remember that learning is about sharing ideas and concepts.

- Don't be afraid to ask for help if you are unsure whether a post is appropriate.

3. Engagement

- Engage fully with the class using the full suite of engagement tools provided.

- Use the chat functions on live classes to add comments, share thoughts and respond to prompts relevant to the class or topic being discussed.

- Always try to be constructive and supportive in your comments to your fellow students.

- Have the courage to post a discussion comment as your fellow students are likely to benefit from your insights.

- If using a discussion forum, ensure that your contributions are well-informed and substantiated and keep an eye out for new comments related to your posts.

- Remember not to expect everyone to be online 24 hours per day and that responses to posts may not be instantaneous.

4. Mind your language!

- Always be courteous and respectful to your lecturer and fellow students.

- Avoid being confrontational and do not use inappropriate or offensive language.

- To maintain the integrity of your contribution and avoid confusion, do not use abbreviated text or slang.

- The use of emojis can help express your feelings or intent, but don't over-use them.

- Remember: a comment posted in anger cannot be taken back. Think before you speak or write!

- Within an online environment, using Caps Lock in your messages is the equivalent of shouting, so avoid this.

Conditions and Guidelines
governing the use of 'Technology Enhanced Tools' and 'Online Content'

By registering to study at or agreeing to the use of online facilities and services of Galway-Mayo Institute of Technology (the Institute), you are giving an undertaking to comply in full with the Digital Learning Charter principles, Netiquette and the conditions and guidelines set out below. These requirements regulate the use of 'Technology Enhanced Tools' and 'Online Content' supplied or otherwise made available to you by the Institute as part of your module or programme of learning.

The following definitions of terms are provided:

Technology Enhanced Tools refers to those on- or off-line mechanisms by which the Institute makes available 'Online Content' to you.

Online Content refers to all proprietary module and programme material, and other online content which is owned by the Institute, together with all information contained within synchronous and asynchronous (recorded) lectures, which may include videos, discussion or chat forums, wikis, blogs and podcasts, ePortfolio Designs, Illustrations, Photos, Images, Illustrations or Project.

Submitted Materials refers to materials that are created, posted or uploaded using the Technology Enhanced Tools.

Students of GMIT are granted a non-transferable, non-exclusive license to use Technology Enhanced Tools and or Online Content on the conditions set out in the list below.

1. The Online Content contains material which is proprietary to the Institute and includes logos, trademarks, trade names, photographic and video images, sound recordings, audio tools and website layout. You are not permitted to download or copy these materials except to the extent that they are required for module learning and assessment. You must not remove, alter, reproduce, copy or recopy, or post elsewhere any content material, identification, logo, copyright notice or trademark from the Online Content.

2. Online content, including recorded synchronous lecturers which may include the capture of student discussions, debates, presentations, etc., will be retained by the Institute for the duration of the academic year.

3. You may use the Technology Enhanced Tools and Online Content only for educational purposes and in line with the Institute's online teaching and learning processes and procedures.

4. You must not transfer Online Content to any other person in any way. Any use, copying or adaptation of the Online Content that is not authorised may constitute an infringement of intellectual property rights and may be illegal.

5. You are responsible for your Submitted Materials. By submitting or storing any material you confirm that it is not defamatory, obscene or illegal and does not infringe any third-party rights. In addition, you confirm that your Submitted Material is your own work, or you have permission to use and upload it. You agree that your Submitted Materials can be lawfully published off- or on-line and, as far as you are aware, are not the subject of any dispute.

6. You acknowledge that the Institute may decide at its sole discretion, not to publish your Submitted Materials. The Institute may delete or modify your Submitted Materials at any time without notice should the material fail to comply with the Institute's Digital Learning Charter or any other contractual terms to which it is subject.

7. The Institute will take steps to review if necessary, your Submitted Materials for publication on any publicly accessible areas of its websites to assess their compliance with the laws of Ireland where the Institute is based and from which its Technology Enhanced Tools are provided. Inclusion of Submitted Materials does not constitute or imply any endorsement, authorisation or recommendation by the Institute in relation to that material or any of the opinions or other statement made within it. The Institute cannot monitor nor can it enforce compliance with all applicable laws and regulations.

8. In posting material, you must adhere to Institute's Digital Learning Charter and not do anything which involves the posting of inappropriate messages (including information which is outside the scope of the discussion topic or module content, or which constitutes a chain letter – a message which includes instructions to forward to other people).

9. In the event that any links to other websites appear on its online sites, the Institute accepts no responsibility or liability for the content of those websites. You should check the terms and condition, copyright and privacy policy of websites you visit.

10. Your license to use Technology Enhanced Tools and Online Content may be restricted, suspended or terminated if you are deemed to breach the conditions listed here.

11. Breaches in the use of Technology Enhanced Tools or Online Content as outlined may result in legal proceedings being instigated against you or any other person or body who infringes the intellectual property rights of the Institute or other owner(s) of the rights.

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(Click on the link)

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Steps to success and some practical advice for GMIT students learning online during COVID-19

The Open University Student Charter, OU Students Union Association