

Mobile Phone Policy

Background information

While there is no legal framework, the Dutch government strongly recommends that from January 2024 all schools implement a policy that will limit the phone & device usage for students in education. This policy refers to all personal devices including phones, tablets and smartwatches. International School Utrecht (ISU) will focus on phone usage in school and laptops at breaktime. If sufficiently implemented the ban will limit distractions and improve performance among students. We will review the process and policy each year.

Aim

To promote a high-quality teaching and learning environment where teachers can teach, and students can learn, free from distractions caused by personal use of devices. Phones should be restricted to minimise distractions during class, ensuring that students can focus on the lesson without disruptions. ISU will continue to work towards fostering student engagement and active participation in the learning process. The rules and policy here aim to encourage face-to-face communication and collaboration among students, which are considered important aspects of a good pedagogical approach. ISU will encourage the use of breaks as quality time away from screens for more social interactions, physical activity, play and face-to-face connections.

Who does this apply to?

The mobile phone policy will cover everyone from Primary (PYP) to Secondary (MYP and DP) in addition to teaching and support staff. Differences will be made clear where needed.

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

- Students who choose to bring mobile phones to school are advised to have them switched off and placed in a separate location that is not physically on them, including break and lunchtimes.
- PYP students will leave phones outside the classrooms for the day and in their school bags (switched off).
- MYP students will each be assigned a school locker. Phones should be placed in their lockers at the start of the day and not picked up again until they are leaving the school (switched off). If a student leaves or moves schools the key must be returned. Failure to return the key or loss of a key will result in a 15 euro fine which will be deducted from the parent's school deposit.
- DP students will have a choice of leaving their phone in their lockers or their bags, switched off. (New smaller lockers to be purchased for DP students, which will be optional).
- When emergencies occur, parents or caregivers should reach their child by calling the school's welcome desk.
- Staff in a classroom environment may have their phone on them to perform registration or communication matters regarding students (Magister/ Parnassys/HelloID). They will be encouraged to place their phones out of sight once the task is performed.

Zones

To make sure students and staff are aware of the rules, two zones will be created at the following times: 08.15 – 16.45.

- Red Zone (no phone usage allowed) – this includes classrooms, corridors, study areas, toilets and the outside playground & courtyards.
- White Zones (mobile phones can be used) – Welcome desk area, staffroom, offices & the DP lounge downstairs (.077).
- After 14.30 a space will be created where students who need to wait in school can have a place to work on their laptops (no phones or gaming).

Break Times

As is stands we promote a device free breaktime. Students have access to laptops through most lessons, approximately 4 hours a day. Research suggests that there should be at least two moments of screen downtime per day. Screen downtime helps with emotional regulation and stress release, students can also take a moment for learning reflections.

As of January 2024, there will be strict rule of no devices (Phones, Tablets, Laptops) at breaktimes at ISU. This will apply to all red zones.

Study Areas

In order to remove temptation of other devices, all break times in the red zones will be device free. Students may use laptops during lesson times in the study area only (outside the classrooms in PYP). Students should not need to work on their laptops during break times. If there is an exceptional circumstance or situation this should be discussed with the teacher involved and agreements made (working in class under supervision, for example).

Exceptional Circumstances

The school's curriculum includes teaching student skills in digital literacy, online safety, and respectful relationships. Each subject has the power to promote this, but a lot will come via the pastoral curriculum and digital citizenship.

Exemptions from the general device usage policy may be considered and granted by the Head of School or Programme Leaders on a case-by-case basis under the following circumstances:

- The student uses their device to monitor or manage a medical condition, which must be documented in the student health and medical register.
- The device serves as an agreed adjustment for a student with a disability or learning difficulties, and this should be documented in the student's educational learning plan or support plan (for example, graphic organisers).
- The student faces attenuating personal circumstances that require more immediate access to their device, such as being the primary caregiver for a child or family member.
- If parents or guardians wish to discuss an exemption request based on these exceptional circumstances, they should write a formal request to a program leaders or head of school.
- Teachers may request students to collect or bring their phone to a class where is supports learning. Design, PHE, Music linked to Reflections, analysis, evidence. Students will be required to place phones back in their lockers once the task is performed.

Consequences

Consequences for using a phone or device in school which goes against the school policy will result in the following consequences.

1. **Warning:**
If a student is caught with a phone or device in a zone where they are not allowed, they will have to immediately place it in their locker (or bag if DP). Teachers or school staff may accompany the student to the location.
2. **Confiscation:**
Teachers or school staff may confiscate a phone or device for repeated offences (same day or different days). If a student is caught using it during prohibited times or zones. The phone will be given to either a Programme Leader or the Welcome Desk. The phone or device may be returned to the student or their parents at the end of the day. Mentors / Classroom Teachers to be informed, Managebac updated in behaviour notes and parents notified. The teacher who confiscated the phone will set the punishment if it was in a lesson.
3. **Detention:**
Repeated offences reports on Managebac will be communicated to the Programme Leader. A detention may be assigned as a consequence for using a banned phone. The student may be required to spend additional time at school, either before or after regular school hours, as a penalty for the violation. Parents will be called or invited for a conversation on behaviour.
4. **Loss of Privileges:**
Students who repeatedly violate phone policies may face the loss of privileges, such as the ability to bring a phone to school for a certain period of time. This could serve as a more significant deterrent for continuous rule breaking.
5. **In-school Suspension:**
In more serious cases, students may be placed in internal suspension, where they are separated from regular classes and school activities for a specified period. During this time, they may be required to complete assignments or reflect on their behaviour.
6. **Educational Programmes or Workshops:**
ISU will require students who violate phone policies to attend educational programmes or workshops on responsible technology use, digital citizenship, or related topics.

It is important for students and parents to be aware of the specific rules and consequences outlined in the school's policy regarding phone usage. Schools usually communicate these policies at the beginning of the academic year, and adherence to the rules helps maintain a positive and focused learning environment.

Exclusions

This policy does not apply to:

- Out-of-school-hours events
- Travelling to and from school
- School Trips (separate information may be given)

Evaluation

An evaluation moment will be planned with staff, students and parents before the new academic year 2024/2025.