

RULES FOR USING WHATSAPP GROUPS FOR OFFICIAL NWU BUSINESS

(Approved by the University Management Committee on 21 July 2021)

1 Introduction

Due to various circumstances at the NWU, it is imperative for the North-West University (NWU) to establish a set of rules for the use of WhatsApp and similar platforms as official business tools. These rules are also required to ensure compliance with the Protection of Personal Information Act¹ (POPIA).

2 Interpretation and application

These rules and guidelines must be interpreted and applied in a manner consistent with, but not limited to –

- 2.1 The Protection of Personal Information Act, 4 of 2013 (POPIA);
- 2.2 The Promotion of Access to Information Act, 2 of 2000 (PAIA);
- 2.3 NWU Information Strategy and Framework for Information Governance;
- 2.4 NWU Communication Policy;
- 2.5 NWU Personal Information Privacy Policy;
- 2.6 The NWU Privacy statement; and
- 2.7 Any other legislation and/or policy that addresses the availability/protection of information held and processed by the NWU.

3 Definitions and abbreviations

The undermentioned definitions and abbreviations are used in the rules and guidelines (unless the context indicates otherwise):

Definition/Abbreviation	Description
POPIA	Protection of Personal Information Act
PAIA	Promotion of Access to Information Act
WhatsApp/Telegram or similar platforms	In these rules and guidelines reference to the WhatsApp/Telegram/similar platforms, includes all similar applications/platforms used in this manner. The principles and rules will be applicable to all platforms used.
NWU employees/staff members	Any individual employed by the NWU on any basis, including full-time, part-time and fixed term.
NWU student	Any individual registered as a student at the NWU, as defined in paragraph 1 of the Statute of the NWU.
Administrator	Any NWU employee/student/stakeholder who has created a WhatsApp or similar group for University related communication purposes.

4 Purpose

The purpose of the rules and guidelines is to establish a set of rules and guidelines for NWU stakeholders when using WhatsApp or similar platforms for official NWU communication and official business of the NWU.

¹ Act 4 of 2013

5 Scope

These rules apply to –

- 5.1 all employees and students of the NWU, who has access or uses WhatsApp or similar platforms for official NWU Communication and/or business;
- 5.2 all official groups created on WhatsApp or similar platforms.

6 Roles and responsibilities

6.1 Administrators of WhatsApp and similar groups

- Create and manage WhatsApp and similar groups;
- Remove any of the prohibited content as contemplated in 8.2;
- Manage membership of the respective WhatsApp and similar group(s);
- Inform members of the policies and rules relating to the use of WhatsApp and similar platforms for official NWU business;
- Revoke membership of any member who does not comply with these rules;
- Register the WhatsApp or similar group on the NWU WhatsApp group database;
- De-register the WhatsApp or similar group when there is no purpose for the group to exist; and
- Delete the WhatsApp or similar group when there is no purpose for the group to exist.

6.2 Members of WhatsApp and similar groups

All members, whether it is an employee or student or other stakeholder will be responsible to:

- Ensure that they comply with the rules for using WhatsApp and similar groups;
- Abide by the instructions from the administrator(s) of the group; and
- To always engage on these platforms in a caring and respectful manner.

7 What must the NWU comply with when using WhatsApp or similar platforms?

When using WhatsApp or similar platforms for official business the following issues must be complied with:

7.1 Inform users that you will use the application with them

Before using WhatsApp or similar platforms, the user must be informed of the fact that the specific platform(s) will be used, as well as the purpose of such use. For this purpose a standard message will be drafted and distributed to all existing WhatsApp or similar groups. This message must also be communicated to all members when a new group is created.

7.2 Asking for consent not necessary

Asking for consent to use WhatsApp or similar platforms will only be allowed after approval for the use of consent has been obtained.

Consent should not be requested as default, as this will result in unnecessary consent being requested. In terms of the POPIA, consent must comply with the specific requirements of consent and should therefore not be used as default.

7.3 Taking care of confidentiality of the data in your WhatsApp and similar groups

Staff members and student leadership should control the professional use of their WhatsApp and similar groups.

The links to the NWU Personal Information Privacy Policy as well as the NWU Privacy statement should be made available on the WhatsApp or similar groups.

8 Rules

8.1 Creating WhatsApp and similar groups

- WhatsApp or similar groups may be created by NWU employees and student leadership if it relates to their duties/functions at the NWU;
- A WhatsApp group must have a specific purpose, including one of the following:
 - Informative
 - Commercial
 - Communicating and sending data

- When creating a WhatsApp or similar group, all users must be informed of the purpose of the group when the group is created.
- The person creating the WhatsApp or similar group will be regarded as the administrator of the group and must ensure that the group is managed effectively and efficiently.
- All groups must be registered on the NWU WhatsApp groups database by the administrator when the groups is created.
- Only use the NWU trademark or NWU approved images as a profile image (as supplied by Corporate Relations and Marketing).

8.2 Prohibited content

The following content may not be published on or via any WhatsApp or similar group used for NWU purposes:

1. content that is defamatory, harassing, threatening, abusive, discriminatory, racist, sexist, homophobic or that would otherwise constitute hate speech;
2. disparaging comments about the NWU or a stakeholder of the NWU;
3. content that is illegal;
4. content that contravenes any policy of the NWU;
5. foul language or language that contravenes the language policy of the NWU;
6. content that is pornographic, obscene, indecent, lewd or suggestive;
7. content that infringes on anyone's intellectual property rights;
8. false or fraudulent information/news;
9. content that is invasive of anyone's privacy, including proprietary information and unauthorised disclosure of any form of personal information; and
10. any other content that may reasonably be considered objectionable by the NWU.

8.3 Inviting members to a WhatsApp or similar group

When inviting members to a WhatsApp or similar group, care must be taken not to add employees and/or students to WhatsApp groups where they don't have an interest. Instead of adding people to these groups, an invitation link must be forwarded to the prospective member to join the group. When the invitee wishes to join, he/she can then accept the invitation.

8.4 Engagement in WhatsApp and similar groups

The following rules are taken into use regarding the engagement in WhatsApp or similar groups:

1. Always stick to the purpose of the group.
2. Don't share irrelevant messages about other topics.
3. Don't share any prohibited content as contemplated in 8.2.
4. Don't spam the group.
5. Don't create huge groups.
6. Don't create groups where you include minors as members of the group.
7. Only accept people who must have access to a group into that specific group.
8. Don't have one-on-one conversations in a group. Switch to private messages for this purpose.
9. Don't post in groups between 21:00 and 07:00, unless it is an emergency.
10. If a message does not request a response, don't respond (e.g. "noted").
11. The group is not a political platform (unless it was specifically set up for that purpose). No arguing, heated opinions, fear mongering and fake news will be permitted.
12. Don't use a group to berate another person or to air grievances.
13. Don't send insensitive messages.
14. Delete the group as soon as possible after it has served its purpose.
15. The sharing of messages as well as contact information of members of the group to other platforms/groups is prohibited.
16. Taking screenshots of conversations from these groups and sharing it with any other party/group/platform is prohibited.