

RULES FOR USING WHATSAPP OR SIMILAR GROUPS FOR OFFICIAL NWU BUSINESS

Approved by UMC, 13 October 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).

These rules will apply to WhatsApp, as well as all similar applications used at the NWU e.g. Telegram, Signal, Skype, as well as any other application used for the same or similar purpose.

2 Interpretation and application

These rules 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; and
- 2.5 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.

¹ Act 4 of 2013

Administrator	Any NWU employee/student/stakeholder who has created a WhatsApp or similar group for University related communication purposes.
Student leadership	All leadership and management structures where students are elected or appointed to, including but not limited to the Student Representative Council (SRC), Student Campus Council (SCC, academic student societies, house committees, and any other subordinate student leadership structure(s).

4 Purpose

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

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

All administrators of WhatsApp and similar groups, whether it is an employee or student will be responsible to:

- Create and manage WhatsApp and similar groups;
- Remove any of the prohibited content as contemplated in 8.2;
- Manage membership of the respective WhatsApp group(s);
- Inform members of the policies relating to the management of information (NWU Information Strategy and Framework for Information Governance² and the Personal Information Privacy Policy³) and the 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; 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 will be responsible to:

- Ensure that they comply with the rules for using WhatsApp and similar groups;
- Abide by the instructions from the administrator 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 rules must be adhered to:

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 platforms will be used, as well as the purpose of such use. For this purpose, the following standard message must be drafted and distributed to all existing WhatsApp or similar groups:

Dear group member,

The NWU is committed to protecting personal information/data. For this purpose, the NWU adopted a Personal Information Privacy Policy as well as a Privacy statement, which establish the rules for the NWU when dealing with personal information. As part of this NWU community, please take note of the purpose of this specific group as follows:

² https://www.nwu.ac.za/sites/www.nwu.ac.za/files/files/i-governance-management/policy/2021%20Update/1P_1.16.1/1P_1.16.1_2021_e.pdf [Accessed: 2021-10-20]

³ https://www.nwu.ac.za/sites/www.nwu.ac.za/files/files/i-governance-management/policy/2021%20Update/1P_1.1.12/1P_1.1.12_2021_e2.pdf [Accessed: 2021-10-20]

This group will be used to keep you informed on matters relating to your connection with the NWU, for commercial purposes and for effective and efficient communication. To be able to manage groups like these the NWU adopted Rules for the use of WhatsApp 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 from the POPIA Task Team.

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 of 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.
- 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 in which they would not have an interest. Instead of adding people to these groups, an invitation link must be forwarded to the prospective member to join the group. Upon indication from the invitee that (s)he wished to join, (s)he could accept the invitation.

8.4 Engagement in WhatsApp and similar groups

The following rules are applicable regarding the engagement in WhatsApp or similar groups:

1. Always stick to the purpose of the group.
2. Do not share irrelevant messages about other topics.
3. Do not share any prohibited content as contemplated in 8.2.
4. Do not spam the group.

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

Original details: (11664754) P:\1. Governance\1.1 Legislation and related administrative processes\1.1.12_POPIA\Rules and Guidelines for using WhatsApp Groups for official NWU business.docm
6 July 2021

File reference: 1Pr_1.1.12_WA