

# Online Safety Education Framework

**Why:** The eSafety Commissioner is developing a framework to guide future Australian school based online safety education initiatives and to help schools assess the quality of programs and approaches. The research underpinning this work found that several online safety education frameworks exist but none are comprehensive enough to be adopted as a national standard.\*



Best practice online safety education should be based on a multicomponent framework addressing:

- 1. Students' rights in the digital age** 
- 2. Individual risk and protective factors** 
- 3. Effective school-wide approaches** 
- 4. Integrated and specific curriculum** 
- 5. Continuously improved through review and evaluation** 

\*This framework is based on research into existing best practice in online safety education, conducted in 2019 by Professor Kerryann Walsh, QUT, in consultation with the eSafety Commissioner.

## Element

### 1. Students' rights in the digital age

Online safety education is based on recognising, acknowledging and understanding students' rights in the digital age.



### 2. Individual risk and protective factors

Online safety education is framed positively but needs to be built on information about risks, and protective and situational factors that increase the likelihood of harm.



### 3. Effective school-wide approaches based on harm prevention

Online safety education is underpinned by effective harm prevention principles.



### 4. Integrated and specific curriculum

Online safety education builds knowledge and skills across key learning areas, includes technical and interpersonal aspects, addresses risk factors and strengthens protective factors.



### 5. Continuously improved through review and evaluation

Online safety education is continuously improved based on evidence, research and the evolving range of online safety issues, risks and harms.



## Actions

- 1.1 Focus on the student.
- 1.2 Uphold students' rights to digital protection, digital provision, and digital participation.
- 1.3 Consider benefits and risks, opportunities and challenges simultaneously.
- 1.4 Students participate in the design, development, and implementation of online safety education.

- 2.1 Acknowledge the positive role of online technologies and use a strengths-based approach.
- 2.2 Understand that risks vary by use of/ access to technologies, recognising not all risk results in harm.
- 2.3 Understand that risks vary by factors such as gender, (dis)ability, socioeconomic status, cultural and language background, sexuality, appearance, and family background.
- 2.4 Acknowledge that differentiation, inclusion and relevance are important.

- 3.1 Teach online safety education to every student, at every year level and every stage.
- 3.2 Use engaging teaching strategies and trustworthy, relatable, technically adept and well-trained facilitators.
- 3.3 Address topics and themes that are relevant and appropriate to a student's age, abilities and individual factors.
- 3.4 Take a balanced and positive approach, avoiding scare tactics and confrontational strategies.
- 3.5 Set clear goals and outcomes that are monitored and evaluated.
- 3.6 Have a supportive school system with strong policy foundations, well-trained teachers and partnerships with other agencies.

- 4.1 Reflect digital citizenship concepts to support greater critical awareness and civic engagement by students.
- 4.2 Reflect social and emotional learning concepts that support students' understanding and management of emotions to have healthy and respectful relationships.
- 4.3 Address specific conduct, contact and content risks and emerging risks.
- 4.4 Promote effective help-seeking as a key protective factor.

- 5.1 Rigorously assess programs and approaches using established methods.
- 5.2 Review annually to strengthen relevance to the evolving range of potential online safety issues, risks and harms.
- 5.3 Regularly share good practice and learnings.

## Next steps:

eSafety will undertake targeted consultations with key online safety education stakeholders to test and refine the framework.

