



# QTU Policy 2023 - 2025

ICT

Booklet

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## **Queensland Teachers' Union Policy**

QTU policy is adopted by the Union's Biennial Conference. Amendments to Union policy may be made at the intervening meetings of State Council.

### **Guidelines for changes to existing policy**

Motions designed to change or create policy should be sent to Council. Under Rule 7.5 (Decisions of Conference), policy adopted by Conference remains in effect unless amended by Council, where a two-thirds majority decision is necessary. Thus, a proposal to contradict the sense of, or change the wording of existing policy, needs a two-thirds majority, ie 66.6 per cent, for such a proposal to be successful. A proposal to change existing policy should:

- be presented as an amendment to existing policy, and
- state its location in the existing policy.

If no policy exists on a matter, a simple majority decision, ie >50 per cent, is needed for such a proposal to be added to policy.

### **Implementation of existing policy**

Motions to implement existing policy are usually directed to Executive for consideration. However, where the implementation would involve a significant allocation of QTU resources (eg a major campaign), or where a branch wishes a major emphasis to be put on an aspect of policy, it would then be appropriate to direct such a motion to Council. These guidelines are designed to facilitate debate on policy issues. If branch officials require explanation of these guidelines or assistance with the formulation of policy motions, they should contact the QTU office in Brisbane.

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## **QTU information and communication technology in education policy 2023-2025**

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# QTU information and communication technology in education policy

## 2023-2025

### 1. Funding public education

The QTU believes that Queensland should aspire to an education system that demonstrates high quality and high equity. The pursuit of excellence and equity have been embedded in Australia's national educational goals, including the current *Mparntwe (Alice Springs) Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians*.

The QTU has long held the belief that matters of excellence and equity of students' educational experience should not depend upon the socio-economic status of their parents, where their school is located, or the wealth of the local school community. All schools within the public system should be fully financed from public sources, should not charge fees and should operate within a public policy of equity of opportunity.

The QTU believes that this long held belief applies to access of information and communications technology (ICT) in contemporary classrooms.

Delivering a high quality, high equity curriculum which realises the potential of digital futures requires increased and sustained investment from the state and federal governments. ICT provision to students – or lack thereof – should not create an additional educational divide between the rich and the poor.

### 2. Equity

The QTU believes that state and federal government has a responsibility to fully fund the use of ICTs in schools and ensure every Queensland child has equitable access to effective teaching and learning in the classroom. Should current or future enacted curriculum require one-to-one devices, it is the QTU's position that these devices should be fully funded by government.

Schools and education systems play a fundamental role in providing learning experiences that prepare students for full and equal participation in civil life. They have a responsibility to act in ways that protect the wellbeing and safety of students, teachers and the broader community. The learning programs they deliver must support diversity and generate equitable outcomes that are independent of socioeconomic status, school location, or the wealth of the local school community. Any utilisation of new digital learning technologies such as AI within the education system must ensure that these principles are not undermined.

#### 2.1 *Bring your own device*

In Queensland state schools, programs like bring your own device (BYOx) are leading to increased equity gaps. In low socio-economic areas, there is a slower take up rate of BYOx. In areas of greater economic privilege, the quality of teaching and learning programs is challenged by some learners having the latest technology while other students in the same class use devices that are several generations earlier.

While socio-economic inequities between students are not new to classrooms, the use of devices to access curriculum materials and undertake learning tasks adds complexity to classroom management, as practices such as requesting that students share a textbook are no longer a solution.

The QTU believes that it is not reasonable for governments or the Department of Education to expect that all students will bring their own devices to school.

Families who may have difficulty providing even one computer with internet connectivity in the home

should not have to endure the indignity of being unable to provide a device for each of their children.

### **3. Effective teaching and learning**

The QTU recognises the highly nuanced and human connection between a teacher and student. Technology can assist teaching and learning, but artificial intelligence can never replace those human relationships.

The QTU believes that technology offers exciting possibilities for teachers to facilitate connections throughout the teaching profession, and amongst students and learning. The QTU celebrates the curriculum and pedagogical innovation of our members who have shared examples of effective teaching and learning resources which embed ICT and digital technologies. As teachers and school leaders share professional ideas with the global teaching profession, they must be able to access reliable ICT hardware.

The QTU believes that any ICT infrastructure or teaching resources need to be designed with the end user in mind. Moreover, the context in which the materials will be used needs to be at the forefront of design. QTU members report frustrations with the reliability of ICT infrastructure in schools and insufficient bandwidth to meet the requirements of 21st Century classrooms. When ICT systems fail, teachers' ability to implement the curriculum is impeded. While teachers work to resolve technical problems, they can simultaneously experience an increase in student disruption and disengagement from learning.

#### **3.1 Workload**

The QTU opposes the use of ICTs, digital technology or virtual learning practices that do not contribute to the core business of teaching and learning, but instead contributes to work intensification. The QTU believes that effective teaching, learning, assessing, and reporting is the core business of teachers, and that a range of clerical tasks such as those related to data entry ought to be assigned to other staff members in a school. Excessive data entry, implementation of new digital systems and unreasonable quantities of email are common examples of work intensification that detract from teachers' time to plan, implement, and evaluate effective teaching and learning practices.

The QTU asserts that when any changes to the current use of digital systems (inclusive of online learning platforms and virtual academies), digital technologies, or the introduction of AI tools, an associated workload impact statement is developed by the Department of Education. When undertaking a workload impact statement consideration of the workload associated with the incorporation of new digital technologies into work practices must include the time, professional development, WH&S implications, and an assessment of any impact on industrial and professional working conditions.

In addition, the expectation that teachers and schools adopt new practices, should only be undertaken after consideration of how meaningful the new practice/extra work might be in terms of its relevance to the core business of teaching and learning. Importantly, how the system is going to resource and support its implementation is a key factor for deliberation.

The QTU opposes blanket adoption of any new digital technology initiatives that have not been genuinely consulted upon.

The QTU recognises local consultative committees (LCC) are a key mechanism for resolving workload issues at the workplace level, and adverse impacts on workload that are generated by ICT and digital technologies should be referred to the LCC. Mapping school based tasks against the role descriptions of staff members can be a way for LCCs to resolve issues of work intensification.

## **4. ICT support staff and quality infrastructure**

All state schools need to have confidence in the ICT network and infrastructure in order to reap the benefits of technology in education. To be of value in education, ICT must be reliable. That is, ICT and digital technology infrastructure needs to be maintained by specialist support staff and supported by quality infrastructure.

### **4.1 ICT technicians**

The QTU believes that ICT technicians need to be available for all state schools to ensure continued maintenance and preservation of ICT assets in a timely manner. Technical support should not be the responsibility of teachers or school leaders who already carry a heavy burden of professional duties.

### **4.2 ICT infrastructure**

The QTU believes that the state government has the responsibility to fully fund ICT infrastructure, including initial set up costs and ongoing maintenance, as well as replacement and upgrade costs. The QTU does not support requirements for schools to allocate funds from elsewhere to ICTs in order to enable the delivery of a high quality and high equity curriculum.

To support the delivery of effective learning and teaching, the Department of Education must ensure:

- adequate bandwidth to meet the growth in the use of ICT and digital technology
- reliability of servers and network accessibility
- availability of timely maintenance of Computer for Teachers (CFT) devices,
- cyber safety for employees, students their communities.

### **4.3 Consultation to precede upgrades**

The QTU understands the need for quality ICT infrastructure to be upgraded. The QTU believes that upgrades should only occur following comprehensive consultation with all stakeholders and following thorough testing and review. Reviews of school ICT infrastructure need to take into account issues related to climate, remoteness and usage in which infrastructure will be based. Any upgrade to or introduction of a new operating system must be done only after consultation with end users and must be done in such a way as to minimise disruption and support users as they move to the new system.

## **5. Professional development**

The QTU believes that ICT training and support should be available to all teachers and school leaders, that such professional development should be fully funded, and that there should be an appropriate allocation of release time.

Any additional requirement for teachers to use ICT as core business in schools should be accompanied by an allocation of professional development time to enable familiarisation and effective implementation. Just as teachers differentiate the curriculum to meet the individual learning needs of students, so too the allocation of professional development time for teachers undertaking ICT training should be needs-based.

The QTU believes that a range of training modes should be available to teachers including, but not limited to: face-to-face tutorials, collegial communities and online training. Teachers should not be placed in positions where low exposure to ICT hampers their ability to deliver effective learning and teaching programs. Such a position is demoralising to the teaching profession, which values professional skills and is motivated to ensure successful outcomes for all students.

Teachers and school leaders need an appropriate allocation of release time to undertake professional

development that enables consideration of the applications of new technology and software, experimentation with the applications, alignment of new technology and software with pedagogical practices, and engagement in collegial communities to share practice.

## **6. New and emerging technologies**

The QTU recognises that flexible and hybrid modes of delivery provide innovative options for education services. However, the QTU contends that teaching and learning is best served when educator and student are co-located, sharing real time and space, and that there is a diminution in education delivery when this sharing is disrupted. This extends to distance education programs that, at a minimum, deliver face-to-face opportunities for their student cohorts on an annual basis.

Novel digital technologies have had, and will continue to have, a significant impact on teaching and learning practices and, by extension, on education leaders, teachers and students. While there are clear benefits from many advances in technology, the introduction of new ways of learning and working requires careful management to preserve the integrity of education systems and their fundamental role in preparing children and young people for full and equal participation in civil life.

Any implementation of new and emerging technologies must be include considerations regarding:

- Ethical responsibilities of teachers, schools and education systems,
- Curriculum and pedagogy implications
- Products and platform use
- Workplace health and safety considerations

## **7. Digital futures**

Students in today's Queensland classrooms will be tomorrow's global citizens. Classrooms must enable learners to connect with one another in ways that celebrate intercultural understanding and active citizenry. Technology can be used to enable local and global connections, intra and interpersonal understanding, and connections with experiences from other times and places. The QTU believes that ICT to support effective learning and teaching and be embedded as part of the curriculum across all learning areas, rather than forming a major curriculum focus in its own right.

The entrance of artificial intelligence (AI) platforms into an environment that lacks consistent digital technology guidelines, and has not appropriately considered the workplace health, safety and wellbeing implications of AI, has created an urgent need to create a framework that addresses the concerns of the broader community and includes the full suite of legal, industrial, professional and educational issues that arise with the increased use of digital technologies.

The broader community includes entities such as state and federal governments, government and non-government school systems, teacher registration authorities, curriculum and assessment authorities, providers of initial teacher education and developers and providers of digital technology products and platforms, as all of these entities impact upon and engage with teachers and school systems.

Further, those engaged in developing guidelines and frameworks for digital learning must communicate with unions regarding risks, challenges, and opportunities. This ensures that practices adopted are informed by the profession's voice and reflect the needs of teachers and education leaders, students, and the systems in which they are located.

### **7.1 Professional autonomy**

The QTU believes that teachers and school leaders are best placed to make pedagogical choices that will best meet the needs of their students. Teachers and school leaders should exercise professional

autonomy in selecting ICT and digital technology that might support curriculum implementation.

The QTU believes that the human relationship between a teacher and student cannot be usurped by integration of ICT and digital technology. The QTU recognises future focused pedagogies might use technology as a platform, but classrooms should not become subordinate to technology's use.

The QTU believes that any pedagogical decisions regarding resources and learning experiences provided for any given cohort of students must rest with classroom teachers and, crucially, cannot be replicated by AI or other technologies. Decisions about the use of AI within classroom practice cannot be imposed upon teachers by education systems and must only occur after agreement is reached via those systems' consultation provisions. While an AI tool may be able to generate a lesson plan, assessing its suitability for use with specific students, and making any necessary modifications to enhance the learning experience requires context-specific, intrinsically human interactions between students and teachers.

Government and school systems also have a responsibility to ensure that educational systems operate in ways that advance the interests of schools, students, teachers and education leaders, and not those of product and platform providers.

### **7.1.1 Curriculum**

Students need to be encouraged to maintain a critical awareness of information and be taught critical thinking skills to support their own discerning choices about the validity and reliability of information that is found online.

The QTU asserts that the federal and state governments have overarching roles in relation to curriculum, via the National Curriculum and Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA), and the various (state-based) education systems and the Queensland Curriculum and Assessment Authority (QCAA).

These entities must ensure that decisions made related to new and emerging digital technologies are undertaken *after* rigorous consultation with the teaching profession.

Given the rapid pace of change in digital technologies, consultation processes must be ongoing, to ensure the approaches adopted meet the needs of the profession.

## **8. Cyber-security, health, safety and wellbeing**

The QTU expresses concern over the implications of ICT and digital technologies for the cyber safety and security of teachers, school leaders, students and their communities.

### **8.1 Cyber security**

The QTU expresses concern over the use of big-data that is collected under the guise of supporting public policy. The QTU does not support the collection of big-data that privileges notions of public interest over the right to privacy of QTU members.

The QTU also expresses concern over the proliferation of ICT devices in classrooms that could be used to photograph or record students and/or teachers without appropriate consent. The QTU believes the rapid increases in devices being used in classrooms requires the Department of Education to produce guidelines for the design of 21st Century classrooms.

The QTU assert that schools have limited capacity to protect education leaders, teachers and students from malware and cyber-attacks, and from sites that aim to groom or radicalise youth, disseminate adult material such as pornography, or provide avenues for bullying. The proliferation of devices in classrooms could be used to photograph or record students and/or teachers without appropriate consent. Government and education systems' policies and protocols must ensure that adequate and appropriate protections are in place and that the systems adopted are not solely reliant individuals to establish safe

ways of working.

**Protection of Data:** School systems must ensure that the sharing of personal data meets the highest privacy thresholds. Clear limits on: (i) the type of data to be shared; (ii) where and how data will be stored; (iii) the length of time that data may be stored; (iv) the purpose for retrieving data and; (v) personnel who can access the data, must be provided to ensure clarity exists for those managing data within schools. Matters of data privacy are not always anticipated at the point where a system, school or teacher initially engages with a given product, and this requires ongoing consideration as the use of platforms and products evolve.

## ***8.2 Workplace health, safety and wellbeing***

The QTU asserts that a safe system of work means that prior planning based on quality information and research is used to implement any new practice. The new practice should also be devised in such a way that the workers will have time to implement, adjust and review the changes, so they can be re-shaped and the system of work improved. For example, this may mean front-ending time for regular consultation regarding operational issues and their impact on workers' physical and psychosocial wellbeing.

**Legislative considerations:** Section 19 of the Workplace Health and Safety (WH&S) Act requires employers, when introducing any new initiatives that could have WHS implications, to consult with workers on these matters. There must be active consultation with workers during the design, implementation and review phases of new work practices. Safer systems of work can and should be implemented if consultation concludes it is necessary. The impacts of new digital technologies and AI upon education leaders, teachers and students will require education systems to develop ongoing systems of consultation and review, as is their obligation under the Act.

**Physical and psycho-social implications:** The increased in the use of digital technologies introduces new WH&S challenges. These include an increase in biomechanical injuries, as a result of prolonged exposure to poorly designed workspaces, and new psychosocial hazards, due to expectation that staff members are available 24/7 to respond to work matters. The gradual reduction in executive function and emotional regulation skills in those that spend extensive periods engaged with digital technologies, is an additional risk. These new WH&S concerns must feature in the development and review of systems of work that incorporate AI.

The QTU believes the rapid increases in devices being used in classrooms requires the DoE to produce guidelines that include reference to the design of 21st Century classrooms. The guidelines need to give consideration to the health and safety of both teachers and students, covering issues such as:

- electrical cords running around classrooms, particularly in spaces where students have water bottles
- appropriate ventilation and cooling
- ergonomically designed furniture
- reducing the impact of glare on screens
- screen fatigue management
- laying out the room to enable teachers to monitor students and ensure safe WHS practices for the charging and use of digital devices.