

# eProfessionalism



# **EPROFESSIONALISM**

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# CONTENTS

Module overview	1
1. What is eProfessionalism?	2
2. Being a digital citizen	4
3. Digital footprint	6
4. Operating in a digital world	8
5. Ethics	10
6. Privacy	12
7. Confidentiality	14
8. Use of images	16
9. Check your knowledge	22
10. Conclusion	25



## Aims and objectives

This module will:

- explain eProfessionalism and how it will help you in the workplace.
- help you understand the difference between eProfessionalism and Professionalism.
- explore the different facets of being an eProfessional.
- explore some of the legal, ethical and organisational constraints to recording and sharing images.

After completing this module, you will be able to:

- know what is meant by eProfessionalism
- build your online presence as an eProfessional
- understand the legal, ethical and organisational rules around image-sharing.

## Module sections

1. [What is eProfessionalism?](#)
2. [Being a digital citizen](#)
3. [Digital footprint](#)
4. [Operating in a digital world](#)
5. [Ethics](#)
6. [Privacy](#)
7. [Confidentiality](#)
8. [Use of images](#)
9. [Check your knowledge](#)
10. [Conclusion](#)

[Download versions](#) available on the homepage.

**Duration:** 

Approximately 30 minutes

**Student partnership** 

This module was developed with UQ student partners as part of a [Student-Staff Partnership](#) project.

**Graduate attributes**

Knowledge and skills you can gain from this module will contribute to your [Graduate Attributes](#):



Respectful leaders

This module is part of [Digital Essentials](#), a series of online modules to help you quickly build your digital skills so you can succeed in study and work.

Return to [UQ Library](#).

# 1. WHAT IS EPROFESSIONALISM?

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*eProfessionalism is the way you engage yourself online in relation to your profession, including attitudes, actions, and your adherence to relevant professional codes of conduct ([University of Edinburgh](#)).*

As an eProfessional you will need a level of digital literacy fit for someone living, learning and working in a digital society.

## What is Professionalism and is it different to eProfessionalism?

Professionalism includes a variety of personal qualities and behaviours that demonstrate commitment to effective performance in a given job. Commitment and confidence, responsibility and dependability, honesty and ethics, and appearance and professional presence are central professional characteristics. eProfessionalism focuses only on the online context and can be considered a sub-group of professionalism. Read more about professionalism in [Characteristics of Professionalism – Career Trend](#).

## Characteristics of professionalism and eProfessionalism

Intangible values shared by both professionals and eProfessionals are:

- integrity.
- reputation.
- honesty.
- respect.
- accountability.
- respectful attitude.
- high degree of self-regulation.

## Professional associations and accreditation bodies

Many professional bodies and accreditation bodies have published codes of conduct which include ethical topics such as:

- confidentiality.
- use of images.
- professional obligations to various groups including children, indigenous people, patients, clients



and psychologists.

- codes of ethics e.g. for teachers, social workers.

## Workplaces

Some workplaces do not have a formal code of professionalism but will have unwritten rules covering professional attitudes and behaviours . Workplaces, such as UQ, have a Policy and Procedures Library which govern guidelines, forms and behaviours.

[Policies, procedures and processes](#), from the Australian Government, is designed to help businesses identify and design their own policies.

## 2. BEING A DIGITAL CITIZEN










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You may have heard different industries talk about being good corporate citizens. According to [Scott Stephenson](#), being a good corporate citizen means being guided by “strong moral and ethical standards in daily interactions”. In the same way, being an eProfessional means being a good digital citizen and being able to relate effectively to the digital world of people, technologies and systems. Your online presence reflects your professional image.

The [Australian eSafety Commissioner](#) has information on key issues and managing online safety. It targets different audience types such as young people, seniors, women, and others.

### Understand digital citizenship and what it covers

The most well-known framework is Mike Ribble’s [Nine Themes of Digital Citizenship](#). The nine themes are outlined in the table below:

Icon	Theme	Key Concepts
	Access	participating in society electronically; having access to the internet
	Commerce	buying and selling online; online shopping
	Communication	communicating online; social media; sharing information
	Etiquette	online behaviour
	Health and wellness	staying healthy around technology; technology and mental health
	Law	responsibility for what we do online; Australian law and the internet
	Literacy	learning about technology; teaching others how to use technology
	Rights and responsibilities	online freedom; open access information
	Security	staying safe online

### 3. DIGITAL FOOTPRINT

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You may have heard the term **digital footprint** before, but do you know what it means? This short introduction from the Internet Society explains what your digital footprint is.



[Four reasons to care about your digital footprint \(YouTube, 8m\)](#)



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://uq.pressbooks.pub/digital-essentials-eprofessionalism/?p=41#oembed-1>

Your digital footprint is often there forever, even if you think you have deleted it. There are plenty of examples of celebrities who have deleted ill-advised tweets after a backlash only to have screenshotted versions circulated. This is also true of websites. The [Internet Archive Wayback Machine](#) contains snapshots of a huge range of websites from the 1990s to the present so you can see how websites have changed over time.

It is best to assume that anything you post online is going to be permanent and public. A good rule of thumb is to ask yourself whether you would be happy with a future employer or your family members seeing the item you post. Your digital footprint can affect your employability. **eRecruitment** is becoming more prevalent with employers admitting to looking at a candidate's online profile before an interview. Your online presence or personal branding could affect the way a potential employer views you.

Email accounts for professional and personal use

It is good practice to have a separate email account specifically for professional use and making your personal accounts more private. Before setting up a professional email address, there are some things to consider:

- Avoid nicknames or anything potentially unprofessional.
- You can use your own domain name or email hosting site.
- Use your UQ email for any UQ related activities while you are a UQ student.

Read [Student perceptions of peer credibility based on email addresses](#). Have you considered how your current personal email may reflect on your professional image?

## Check your knowledge



*An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:*

<https://uq.pressbooks.pub/digital-essentials-eprofessionalism/?p=41#h5p-2>

## Social media and your eProfessional identity

Avoid the following on social media, such as X (Twitter) or Facebook:

- Posting provocative images, text or video that includes personal information or inappropriate or obscene material.
- Displaying posts of drug use or drinking.
- Writing blogs, tweets or posts of a discriminating nature relating to race, gender or gender identity, relationship status, age, impairment or religious beliefs as per Australia's anti-discrimination law.
- Showing links or images portraying criminal behaviour.
- Using false information about qualifications or previous employment.

The [Social Media](#) module has information on using social media and specific information on [improving your online brand](#).

## 4. OPERATING IN A DIGITAL WORLD

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### Building online networks

There are social networks created specifically for professionals and businesses. Some advantages of creating a professional online account to compliment your resume include:

- A strong professional brand.
- Visibility in an online recruitment world.
- Some sites provide access to daily feeds with relevant posts.
- Many online networks allow you to search and apply for jobs.
- You may be able to showcase your work through video, documents and other mediums such as my ePortfolio.
- Employers can look for you rather than you searching for a job.

### UQ ePortfolio

Your UQ ePortfolio provides a platform that enables you to:

- track and showcase the development of competency and professional skills while studying.
- reflect on skills developed outside of study which illustrate your employability skills such as volunteering and work experiences.

### LinkedIn

LinkedIn is a popular professional networking site that allows individuals and companies to establish a network. This enables you to follow or interact with people you work with, or are interested in collaborating with. Your LinkedIn profile is usually the first thing that appears in a Google search.

### Creating a Personal Learning Network (PLN)

A Personal/Professional Learning Network (PLN) is an informal learning network that uses social media to help you connect with peers and future colleagues. It can be described as “a situation where nobody knows everything, everyone knows something, and what any given member knows is accessible to any other member upon request on an ad hoc basis” ([Fans, bloggers, and gamers : exploring participatory culture, Jenkins, 2006](#)).



Watch [Creating a PLN \(YouTube, 1m39s\)](#)



*One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://uq.pressbooks.pub/digital-essentials-eprofessionalism/?p=47#oembed-1>*

Using a PLN provides opportunities to collaborate and share information, continually develop your skills and remain competitive in the job market.

## How to build and grow your PLN

- Spend 10 to 20 minutes a day interacting with your peers.
- Create social media accounts and follow peers within your area of interest.
- Join and follow groups in LinkedIn and Facebook based on your professional interests.
- Start following relevant blogs, podcasts and YouTube channels to engage with peers.

## Communication

In your professional life, it is likely you will communicate online regularly via different mediums, including email, messaging and online meetings. The [Communicate and collaborate](#) module explains different strategies for communicating effectively.

## 5. ETHICS

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Ethics is an integral part of both eProfessionalism and Professionalism. It is important for both our professional and personal lives. Each work area will have a set of ethics that are similar but not necessarily identical.



### Personal ethics

The basic principles and values that govern interactions among individuals. Sound personal ethics are typically those that positively impact the experience of others when used to govern an individual's social or business-related behavior, and at the very least, such ethics should not have a negative impact on others.



### Professional ethics

Professionally accepted standards of personal and business behavior, values and guiding principles. Codes of professional ethics are often established by professional organizations to help guide members in performing their job functions according to sound and consistent ethical principles.



### Business ethics

Business ethics is the study of appropriate business policies and practices regarding potentially controversial subjects including corporate governance, insider trading, bribery, discrimination, corporate social responsibility, and fiduciary responsibilities. The law often guides business ethics, but at other times business ethics provide a basic guideline that businesses can choose to follow to gain public approval. Business ethics are meant to ensure a certain level of trust between consumers and corporations, guaranteeing the public fair and equal treatment (Investopedia).



### Academic integrity

The Australian Government Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (TEQSA) commissioned scholars to share research, develop and deliver a suite of workshops and create a toolkit to assist integrity practitioners with promoting academic integrity.

In Australia there are codes of ethics produced not only by the government but also by professional accreditation boards such as the Medical Board of Australia, the Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia



and state Departments of Education. Many organisations have written codes of conduct which embody the principles of ethical practice.



[Find out about UQ's Academic Integrity Modules \(AIM\)](#). The modules are **compulsory** for all **new to UQ** students and will help you learn what academic integrity is, why it is so important, and how you can act with integrity in your studies. The modules are in two parts and it will take about an hour to complete each of them.

## What does this mean in the online environment to you as an eProfessional?

- Understand what and how you post information online. The [Confidentiality](#) and [Use of images](#) sections explain more on this topic.
- Before sharing information check that it is accurate and reliable e.g. don't share Facebook posts or tweets without checking them.

## 6. PRIVACY

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The definition of digital privacy covers three categories:

- **Information privacy** – covers how personally identifiable information is collected and used.
- **Communication privacy** – covers that individuals have an expectation that their online communications are secure.
- **Individual privacy** – covers that individuals can choose the types of information they are exposed to rather than seeing unwanted information.

There is more about privacy in the Digital security module.



The Office of the Australian Information Commissioner introduced the [Privacy Act 1988](#) to promote and protect the privacy of individuals.

The Privacy Act includes [13 Australian Privacy Principles](#), which apply to some private sector organisations, as well as most Australian Government agencies.

Government agencies usually provide statements of privacy covering individuals and organisations. For example, [Services Australia](#) has a comprehensive website with information for individuals and organisations.

- Information for individuals covers Families, parents, job seekers, older Australians, your health and much more under each subheading.
- Information for organisations covers business, health professionals, community with more information under each subheading.

Anything relating to children's information, be it health or education, is bound by government legal obligations e.g. Queensland Government agencies, including Queensland Schools, are subject to the [Information Privacy Act 2009 \(Qld\)](#). The [Child Protection Act 1999 \(Qld\)](#) protects the personal information of children in the child protection system.

The [Code of Ethics for Teachers in Queensland](#) outlines the importance of respecting confidentiality.

The [Australian Association of Social Workers Code of Ethics](#) part 5.2.4 deals with information privacy/confidentiality.

## Privacy for Indigenous-related information

Indigenous related information is also covered by confidentiality and privacy regulations.

- Oxfam Australia has produced Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural protocols.
- The Australian Society of Archivists produce toolkits and conduct events and workshops covering Indigenous Recordkeeping and Archives.
- The National Library of Australia and various Australian State Public Libraries hold and manage collections of Indigenous material.

## 7. CONFIDENTIALITY

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Confidentiality covers both information and people.

### Sensitive information

Information may have confidentiality requirements based on the type of information it is, or because it concerns a member of a vulnerable group.

In Australia, the following types of information may have confidentiality requirements:

- Information provided in professional confidence (i.e. for instance, your lawyer).
- health-related information.
- commercial-in-confidence information.

Information concerning a member of a vulnerable group may also have confidentiality requirements:

- Children (including children in the foster care system).
- Adults who cannot legally grant consent.
- Indigenous people.



One example of a vulnerable group is children in out-of-home care. In 2021, there were about 46,200 children in out-of-home care in Australia ([Australian Institute of Health and Welfare](#), Child protection Australia 2020–21). Children in the out-of-home care system have a right to privacy under the Child Protection Act 1999 (Qld), including a right not to be identified as a child in contact with the child protection system. In situations where a safety risk has been identified, images that could expose the child's location should not be shared.

### Commercial confidentiality

A company may consider certain information to be commercial-in-confidence, including:

- intellectual property owned by the company.

- trade secrets.
- past successful tenders.
- operational information.
- any information that the unauthorised disclosure of which could give rise to a breach of confidentiality action.

Commercial confidentiality may be protected by contractual agreements between parties, particularly when information is being shared outside of the organisation, but this may not always be the case. A company's employees have an obligation to protect commercial confidentiality.

## Check your knowledge



*An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:*

<https://uq.pressbooks.pub/digital-essentials-eprofessionalism/?p=60#h5p-1>

## Professional confidentiality

Many professional bodies outline a professional duty of confidentiality where privacy covering contacts or patients is required such as:

- Doctors.
- Physicians.
- Nurses and midwives.
- Physiotherapists.
- Psychiatrists.
- Psychologists.
- Occupational Therapists.

Read more in the [Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency's social media policy](#).

## 8. USE OF IMAGES

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### Photos and images for work or study

There are many legitimate reasons to take and share images with other people in a work or learning environment:

- **communicate important information** and quickly receive feedback from colleagues.
- **share interesting case studies** in an educational context.
- **document your work experience** in a way that respects client confidentiality.

An eProfessional should be aware of legal, professional or organisational responsibilities when taking, sharing and storing photos or images.



Clinical photography is widely practised in Australian hospitals for the purposes of teaching and research, and to more effectively consult with colleagues.

A 2013 [study by Burns and Belton](#) on camera-use by Australian clinicians at an Australian tertiary hospital found that 47% of surveyed staff captured photographs of patients in the last year. The authors found the “endemic policy non-compliance in the area of consent for clinical photography” to be particularly problematic, writing:

The current lack of compliance for consent, capture, storage and disposal of images, in conjunction with misconceptions regarding copyright, puts patients' personal information at risk with a high potential for harm given that the security and distribution of electronic information is only as good as the least dependable individual.

If you are a clinician, read the Australian Medical Association's (AMA) [Clinical images and the use of personal mobile devices](#).

### The risks in sharing photographs

- Once you share an image it can enter the **public domain** and be very difficult to remove.
- Information in an image can be **combined with other publicly available information** to identify

a person.

- **Facial recognition software** is increasingly able to identify people.



There may be legal, professional or organisational rules around protecting confidentiality.

## Consent to use photos or images

In many cases, you should first seek **consent** prior to capturing a person's image. A person grants their consent when they give verbal or written approval for you to take a photograph.

In Australia, when photographing in a **public place**, you do not usually need to ask for consent. This is because there is no general right to privacy under Australian law. However, the [Arts Law Centre of Australia](#) recommends that when taking photos in a public place that the photographer:

should be prepared to respond to this situation, either by acknowledging the concerns of the parents [or others] and adopting appropriate strategies, such as explaining what you are doing and asking if it is OK to take photographs; or otherwise have the information on street photographer's rights so that you can have a conversation in which you explain what you are doing and why you have a right to engage in street photography.

## How should you obtain consent?

As part of the consent process, you should:

- notify the other person whom you wish to take a picture of.
- confirm that they can give consent (unless it is obvious).
- ensure that they understand how you intend to use the image.

- record how they wish to be identified in any captions.
- ensure that they provide assent or approval.

The Australian Medical Association's Clinical images guide which includes how to obtain consent.

## Written or verbal consent?

Obtaining written or verbal consent may depend on the circumstances. When dealing with vulnerable groups (including children or patients), it is generally advisable to seek **consent in writing**. This is sometimes called a **model release**.

At UQ, the University's Office of Marketing and Communications [mandates the use of consent forms](#) where an individual's face is recognisable (with some exceptions), or where an individual is below the age of 18. Having a consent form will prompt you to make sure you cover all points of the consent process.

Verbal consent may be enough for low-risk situations.



You are involved in a field work-placement for your tourism course, working with a group of eco-tourism operators. You wish to take a photo of the group for your social media. Although they readily agree, as you explain what you intend to do with the photo, you get the impression that not all people in the group are familiar with social media and may not understand how it works. Have they given you informed consent?

## Use of photos and images

It is important that the image is only used in a way that is consistent with the conditions under which consent was granted. For example, if the individual, as part of the consent process, asks to be identified a certain way, you need to ensure your caption reflects that.



Plastic surgeons often use photography to connect with potential patients and for educational purposes.

Read [When Is Posting about Patients on Social Media Unethical “Medutainment”?](#) This



article describes a fictitious case study in which Dr Mayer obtains consent from Alexis to take photos, but Alexis is still upset with Dr Mayer's social media post.

How did Dr Mayer make Alexis feel and what might Alexis do as a result?

## Check your knowledge



*An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:*

<https://uq.pressbooks.pub/digital-essentials-eprofessionalism/?p=63#h5p-3>

## De-identification of images

There may be instances where you may use an individual's image, provided you de-identify or anonymise the image first. This process may involve:

- removing names and location information (in image metadata).
- blanking out distinguishable features (e.g. jewellery, tattoos, birthmarks).
- avoiding capturing an individual's face.

## Insensitive sharing

Sometimes people share images in ways that do not necessarily break legal, professional or organisational rules around image sharing, but that nonetheless reflect poorly on that individual. For this reason, you should always avoid posting images that may be interpreted as insensitive or insulting.

## Storage and access

Storage of photos and images used in a professional capacity should be planned and secured with decisions about who will have ongoing access to the photos and images decided in advance.

Photographs of patients, taken in a clinical setting, need to be protected from “misuse, loss, unauthorised access or interference, modification, and disclosure” (See the [Australian Medical Association’s Clinical images guide](#).)

## Information to consider when storing images

### Location

Is there a particular location or platform to store the photos and images? Images stored on a personal mobile device or USB drive may be more vulnerable to loss than those saved on a computer drive or cloud platform. Read about local and online storage in our Working with files module.

Once photos and images are uploaded to the secure location, they should be deleted from any other device such as a mobile phone or camera.

### Access and privacy settings

When you consider the location or platform you also need to think about who will have access to the images. Are there privacy controls that need to be put in place to ensure the images are only accessible to relevant people?



Midwifery and education students are expected to use ePortfolio to document their educational journey and reflect on their professional experiences. At the same time, both cohorts of students work with groups of people where confidentiality is paramount.

ePortfolio allows users to upload text, images and video content. While this can be a vital tool for course coordinators to assess learning, students may also sometimes use their ePortfolio to demonstrate their professional competencies to potential employers.

Images appearing in ePortfolios may not necessarily breach confidentiality if shown to your course coordinator, but they may when shown to potential employers.

## Metadata and captioning

It is very important that metadata and captioning of the photo or image are appropriate. Metadata is data about data. In the context of photography, most smart devices automatically attach metadata to images, including when and where the image was taken (with longitude and latitude coordinates). Documenting the caption for the image should be part of the consent process. Your organisation may have guidelines on how images should be captioned.

Read about metadata in our [Working with data and files module](#).

## 9. CHECK YOUR KNOWLEDGE

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All the answers to the quiz questions can be found in this module.

Your response data will **not** be gathered if you answer the questions below. [Take a screenshot](#) of **Your result** at the end of the quiz if you are required to show you have completed it.

### ? eProfessionalism quiz

There are 10 questions to answer. After you answer a question, click the arrow to move to the next question.



*An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:*

<https://uq.pressbooks.pub/digital-essentials-eprofessionalism/?p=71#h5p-4>

If you are required to get a certificate with your name, take this version of the [eProfessionalism quiz \(requires a UQ login\)](#).

**Note for Teaching staff:** You can [download and embed both the module and H5P quiz](#) in their courses.

## Module summary

### ① What is eProfessionalism?

- eProfessionalism is the way you engage yourself online in relation to your profession.
- Professionalism is part of eProfessionalism but also covers the personal qualities and behaviours required to be effective in a job.

## ② Being a digital citizen

- As a digital citizen, an eProfessional is able to relate to the digital world of people and technologies.
- A digital citizen has the skills and knowledge to use digital technologies for communication and creation of content.

## ③ Digital footprint

- Your digital footprint is a record of all that you have done online and is permanent and public.
- eRecruitment is more prevalent and your online presence or digital footprint can affect how you are viewed by a potential employer. It is important that you plan your eProfessional identity carefully.

## ④ Operating in a digital world – communication

- Communicating effectively online using different mediums is necessary to build eProfessionalism.
- Understanding and knowing how and when to use different mediums such as X (Twitter), LinkedIn etc.

## ⑤ Ethics

- Ethics is part of our professional and personal lives and should also be applied in the online environment. We can do this by ensuring online information is reliable and accurate before sharing.
- Standards of ethics are often written as codes of conduct by governments and professional bodies.

## ⑥ Privacy

- There are government regulations that cover the privacy individuals in Australia.
- The definition of digital privacy covers information, communication, and individuals.

## ⑦ Confidentiality

- Confidentiality covers sensitive information for individuals and vulnerable groups, commercial information, and professional information.
- Professional bodies outline duty of confidentiality in areas such as health and law.

## ⑧ Use of images

- Using images online in a work or education environment is governed by government regulations and professional codes of conduct.
- Consent to use images must be obtained before any photographs are taken. Using a consent form which details how, why and when the photo will be used is crucial.
- It is important that the photo or image is only used in a way that is consistent with the consent given.
- Photographs taken must be protected in a secure setting. Professional bodies have codes of conduct that cover security and use.

## 10. CONCLUSION

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You have completed the eProfessionalism module.

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### Tell us what you think

Use our [Digital Essentials feedback form](#) to give **anonymous** feedback on this module. You can provide your email if you would like us to reply to you.

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### Digital Essentials modules

Build your digital skills with Digital Essentials. Select modules from the 6 themes that match your interests and will help you succeed in study and work.



New to UQ?

- [Getting started at the UQ Library](#)

- [Use UQ systems](#), includes:
  - [Book rooms](#)
  - [Printing at UQ.](#)



## Assignment essentials

- [Find and use media](#)
- [Information essentials](#)
- [Write, cite and submit](#)
- [Types of assignments](#)



## Digital creation

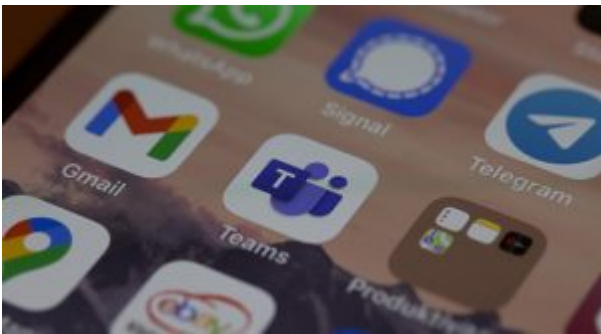
- [Accessibility](#)
- [Choose the right tool](#)
- [Intellectual Property](#)





## Digital security and safety

- [Digital security](#)
- [Internet essentials](#)
- [Social media](#)



## Professional identity and skills

- [Communicate and collaborate](#)
- [eProfessionalism](#)



## Work with information

- [Artificial Intelligence](#)

- [Work with data and files](#)
- [Document your research data](#)

## Teaching staff – use the modules in courses

Teaching staff can embed or link the modules in courses to help build your students' digital literacy.

- There are interactive elements throughout each module and a short H5P quiz at the end.
- The modules are also available for your students to download in EPUB, PDF and HTML format to make them more accessible.

Learn how to [add the Pressbook module](#) to your Learn.UQ (Blackboard) course.

## Assess student learning

Most modules have a final short quiz created in H5P. You can download the H5P quiz from the module and embed it in your course if you would like to check your students' completions or to allow for the results to be transferred to the Grade Centre in your course.

The H5P quiz content will not record any completion data unless you download and add the H5P quiz directly to your course. Students can screenshot the quiz if they are required to show completion.

Learn how to [add the H5P content](#) to your course.