



WiCDS Communication Policy

Communications between colleagues, students, visitors and others at WiCDS are expected to be courteous, professional and appropriate, and to follow the broad imperatives of Critical Diversity Literacy. When communicating with each other, members of the WiCDS community should remain cognisant of intersecting issues of difference and power and should ensure that their communications remain empathetic, thoughtful and productive.

This policy has been drawn up with two primary goals. Firstly, in the mass communication age, we are often inundated with messaging and expected to reply immediately, to the detriment of our mental health and ability to focus. Communications should be limited to working hours and should allow a reasonable window for response. Secondly, all members of the WiCDS community must prioritise clear, respectful and timely communication with each other, colleagues, students and external stakeholders in order to facilitate the smooth running of the Centre.

Student communication policy

Email: Please ensure that we have the correct email information for you. We will add your personal address to the Centre records, but it is also vital to regularly check your Wits email address or to set up forwarding from there to your personal address. Academic staff reserve the right to take up to 72 hours (3 days) to answer emails. Please do not resend your email or escalate your issue before this period has passed. If your issue is urgent and must be attended to before three days have passed, you can send a follow-up email and/or ask the WiCDS administrator to contact the relevant staff member on your behalf.

WhatsApp: While WhatsApp is a valuable tool for making plans and for sharing information and resources with your classmates, we discourage its use for formal communications with lecturers and supervisors. If your teachers and supervisors do agree to the use of WhatsApp, please remain aware of its immediacy and potentially intrusive nature. WhatsApp communications with WiCDS staff should only ever take place during working hours. Please ensure that you share any important information via email, as WhatsApp communications are easily missed and misunderstood.

Ulwazi: Students who are registered for a course will automatically be added to the Ulwazi e-learning portal for that course code. Ulwazi will sometimes be used to share course-related information and communications, which will be delivered directly to your Wits email address. Please ensure that you check this regularly or set up forwarding.

Course reps: The course reps for each class play a vital role in facilitating communications between WiCDS and our student body. Lecturers and administrators may pass information onto the class rep for broader dissemination, or may ask for their



assistance with student-related queries. Students who wish to raise specific issues anonymously can do so through their class rep, and class cohorts who have a collective request can issue it through the class rep. This is a voluntary role, and we are very grateful for the hard work our class reps put into it.

Mailing list: All WiCDS students will be added to the Centre mailing list and will be informed of events, major publications and opportunities. You may be alerted to events separately by your lecturers, but we advise keeping an eye on the mailing list and the WiCDS website to stay aware of our upcoming programme.

Social media: Those of you who are on social media are advised to follow us on Instagram, X, Facebook and/or LinkedIn. WiCDS would be thrilled to share information about your accomplishments and achievements on these platforms (media appearances, public writing, awards, etc.). Please contact Dr Paola Prandini (paola.dinizprandini@wits.ac.za) with relevant information.

WiCDS affiliation: We actively encourage our students to emphasise their relationship with the Centre when doing media or other public-facing work. However, please do be aware that you need to specify your student status rather than simply stating that you are from WiCDS.

Complaints: Student complaints and grievances are dealt with initially within WiCDS, from where they can be escalated to the School of Social Sciences and Faculty of Humanities. We advise that you begin by discussing your issue with your lecturer or supervisor, who will then pass it on to the PG Co-ordinator or Director if necessary. If you are not comfortable speaking to your lecturer or supervisor, you can bypass them and go directly to a staff member whom you feel more comfortable with, including the Director. Please be aware that most complaints, if laid directly with higher structures (eg the Faculty), will be passed back to WiCDS, so beginning within the Centre will make the process faster. You also have access to university bodies like the Disability Rights Unit, Gender Equity Office and Transformation Office, who you can approach directly. Please consult the Wits safeguarding policy for more information on your rights and protections.

Staff communication policy

Email: Unless they are on leave or travelling, WiCDS staff are expected to attend to internal emails within 48 hours. Please do not send follow-ups or communications on the same topic until this period has passed, unless your message is urgent. Staff are expected to respond to student and external emails within three days. It is not necessary to copy the Director or PG Co-ordinator in on all emails; please restrict this to issues that they need to be aware of or to assist with.

WhatsApp: The WiCDS staff WhatsApp group is a location for sharing relevant news and information, including about promotions, publications, media appearances, etc, as well as discussing meetings, schedules and the like. With an acknowledgement of the



immediacy of WhatsApp, staff should avoid using the group outside normal working hours unless necessary. Similarly, work-related one-on-one WhatsApp communications should be restricted to working hours unless urgent. Staff are requested to avoid doubling up communications: please don't send a WhatsApp to let someone know that you have just sent them an email unless that email needs to be attended to immediately. We discourage the use of WhatsApp for student communications where possible. Both staff and students should have a proper paper trail for communications. WhatsApp also facilitates a level of casualness that can lead to complications.

News and media: WiCDS staff are responsible for sharing information with the Centre's marketing officer so that achievements, publications and notable events can be added to our website and shared on social media. Staff are encouraged to foreground their WiCDS affiliation when undertaking media work, but also to be cautious about the claims they make when speaking on behalf of the Centre. Individuals' social media profiles are their own, but again, caution is advised as any public posts or statements do reflect on the Centre.

Attendance: The Monday meetings and Wednesday events are mandatory for full-time staff. Any staff member who is not able to attend, who plans to attend online or who is running late must inform the WiCDS administrator in advance. Staff members who are running late for classes or for meetings with students are expected to let them know as soon as possible.

Notifications: Staff who are on vacation leave, travelling for work or otherwise unavailable are expected to let the WiCDS administrator know in advance and to add an out-of-office reply to their email, including details for someone who can be contacted in their absence in case of emergency.

In-person communication: WiCDS has a robust structure for maintaining internal relations. This includes a weekly meeting (10.00-12.00 on Mondays), frequent check-ins and an annual strategic planning session. All team members, from interns and visitors to portfolio holders and the Chair, are equally valued in these events and equally welcomed to share ideas and opinions. Verbal communications between staff members at such events must remain calm and respectful. Disagreements and emotional responses are a normal part of academic life, but team members must remain cognisant of the basic principles of CDL even when engaging in heated conversations, and must refrain from personal or hurtful speech.