

University of Wisconsin – Madison Second Life® Information for Students and Instructors



UW-Madison provides an island with teaching and meeting spaces on the New Media Consortium campus in Second Life. Second Life is a MOSS, a massive online social simulation. Second Life provides a 3D space for simulations, classroom scenarios, class meetings, music, art venues, role playing; a place where faculty can design class room simulations and classroom

activities.

The purpose of this document is to highlight UW-Madison standards and policies which apply to UW activities organized in SL, inform you of some of the potential challenges you may encounter in SL, and provide a means for resolving issues.

UW-Madison Policies and Second Life

Second Life allows you to create an avatar in a virtual world, an alternate identity in a three-dimensional virtual environment. You must be 18 years old to participate. While virtual environments allow for a variety of rich interactions and group collaborative activities not easily possible on the flat web, it is important to remember that your activities are subject to all applicable university policies, including but not limited to UW-Madison codes of conduct and information technology appropriate use policies. You can find more detailed information about these specific policies on the web:

UW-Madison Student Codes of Conduct (UWS 14, UWS 17, and UWS 18)

<http://www.wisc.edu/students/saja/misconduct/misconduct.html>

UW-Madison Information Technology Appropriate Use Policy

<http://www.cio.wisc.edu/policies/appropriateuse.aspx>

Second Life also has community standards which must be followed. (Terms of service - <http://secondlife.com/corporate/tos.php> and Community Standards - <http://secondlife.com/corporate/cs.php>). If your actions result in Second Life banning you from the community, you will be unable to log on and continue participation in a class or other activity related to the UW-Madison's island. The university has no ability to resolve these types of issues with Second Life. Instructors should be aware of this possibility in course planning.

Each instructor may also want to consider establishing additional guidelines or policies for their Second Life class, similar to what they would do for a face-to-face class.

Second Life Challenges

- Second Life is owned by Linden Labs and hosted on its server. While we have a large amount of control over our own property within Second Life, we are not able to control issues related to server problems or other interruptions. Instructors should consider contingency plans for classes should unexpected problems arise.
- Participation in virtual worlds such as Second Life® provide educational opportunities that are new and innovative, and take place in a virtual universe, an expansive massive online simulation made up of user generated content. It is possible that faculty and students may encounter other users in world whose intention is to interrupt virtual environments through what is referred to as 'griefing'. Griefing means a disturbance to avatars by attempting to cage or restrain, push or use tools to throw avatars from a location or from Second Life®, and change an avatar's appearance. Grievers may also have guns and other assertive types of objects which they use in roleplaying. Grievers may also do virtual damage to buildings and land. In addition, there is a risk of being exposed to nudity, sex related objects and abusive language.
- Before bringing a class to Second Life, instructors are advised to think carefully about design of class activities and educate students about the nature of Second Life as a socially dynamic medium used for cultural activities, education, and personal expression. Students should be alerted that they may encounter objectionable content and students should be encouraged to inform their instructor if they have concerns about participation in the virtual world class exercise. Instructors can help mitigate some of those risks by creating a private class meeting space, or limiting the number of class activities that move away from the UW-Madison's official island.
- Pay attention to copyright laws when using or displaying copyrighted works in Second Life. By agreeing to Second Life's terms of service, you grant Second Life and its other users broad rights to your work, including copyrighted materials or other intellectual property. Instructors are advised to obtain written permission from students prior to including student materials in Second Life and secure the appropriate authority to use other copyrighted materials. Instructors can also seek assistance from the university's Office of Administrative Legal Services (<http://legal.wisc.edu/>).
- Privacy of student records must be considered. The use of Second Life for academic and instructional purposes may involve the creation of student educational records that are protected from disclosure by the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA). Instructors may consider

the option of secure viewing which limits access to students in the class via password protection. If an open environment is selected, instructors need to inform students about the course expectations and obtain written permission from students to share their information in the open classroom environment on Second Life.

Resolving Issues



The UW-Madison island resides within the New Media Consortium of islands designed for educational activities. Encounters with grievers on NMC islands are not common. Yet, when encounters occur, you are encouraged to take action. If you encounter objectionable behavior from another avatar, write down the name of the avatar causing problems. As a first step, student users should bring the problem to the instructor's attention and he or she can attempt an initial resolution. If the problem occurred on the UW-Madison island, your instructor or you can also contact the Virtual World Support group (virtualworlds@lists.wisc.edu) to request assistance in addressing problem avatars. The Virtual World Support Group may opt to pursue the issue with the Linden Labs (the company that makes Second Life). Instructors may contact other resources within UW-Madison including the Office of Administrative Legal Services (<http://legal.wisc.edu/>) or DoIT's Academic Technology department (<http://www.doit.wisc.edu/academictech/>).

We encourage instructors to contact staff connected with the UW-Madison's Second Life pilot http://comets.wisc.edu/sims_games/virtualworld/index.html, or contact the Virtual World Support Group (virtualworlds@lists.wisc.edu) for more information about teaching strategies in Second Life.

By signing this document, you acknowledge that you have read and understand the above challenges and are ready to start your class activity in Second Life.

Participant Signature: _____

Date: _____