



SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY



Aims & Objectives

We understand that the internet and mobile communications technology are used by our staff as a means of communication both at work and at home. The manner in which our internet facilities can be used by our staff and representatives generally is governed by our Safeguarding Policies, Use of Computers Policy, Data protection policy, Student Disciplinary procedures, Staff Disciplinary procedures, Marketing and EDI.

This policy outlines the standards we require our staff to observe when using the internet and social media, the fact that we monitor usage of the internet and social media and the action we will take if this policy is breached. For the College this can and does offer huge advantages in terms of our ability to communicate with students. For students, there are considerable benefits to both their learning and their social experience at College. However, such apparently informal and instant communication can reach a very wide audience and is permanent, increasing the risk of misinformation, inappropriate communication, unprofessional behaviour and negative impact.

1. Scope

This policy refers to “employees” but applies to all staff including those who work on College premises, such as contract workers and volunteers.

2. Social media

In this policy, ‘social media’ means internet-based applications which allow users to collaborate or interact socially by creating and exchanging content, such as social networks, community sites, blogs, microblogging sites, wikis, web forums, social bookmarking services and user rating services. Examples include Facebook, LinkedIn, Yammer, YouTube, Instagram, Twitter, Tumblr, Flickr, SlideShare, Foursquare and Pinterest, the College’s intranet site and the review areas of e-commerce sites.

Social media platforms allow us to build connections and to share ideas and content more broadly and quickly than ever before, and we support their use. However, improper use of social media may give rise to a breach of your employment contract and/or our policies, and/or defamation (i.e., damaging the good reputation of another person or organisation), misuse of our confidential information or that of our students and/or suppliers and/or reputational damage.

This policy does not seek to regulate how staff use social media in a purely private capacity, provided that use has no bearing on the College or its activities. This policy is intended to ensure that staff understand the rules governing their use of social media in relation to their work for us, or when referencing the College, or which may affect us or our activities. It is designed to help you use these platforms and services responsibly, so as to minimise the risks set out above and to ensure consistent standards of use of social media. This policy therefore applies where:

3.1. your use of social media relates to the College or its activities;

3.2. your use of social media relates to or is otherwise connected with your work, whether the intended use is personal or professional;

3.3. you represent yourself, or are otherwise identifiable, as someone employed by, or otherwise associated with, the College.

4. Compliance with related policies and agreements

Social media should never be used in a way that breaches any of our other policies. If an internet post would breach any of our policies in another forum, it will also breach them in an online forum.

5. Monitoring

Our Use of Computers Policy sets out the College's right to monitor, intercept and read communications, and applies equally to the use of social media platforms.

We will also monitor how the College uses social media generally and what is said about us and about other colleges. The Head of Marketing and Communications is responsible for this monitoring.

6. Acceptable use of social media at work

The College IT Systems are first and foremost business tools and using these for personal reasons is a privilege not a right, and is subject to the restrictions set out in this policy.

Employees are permitted to make reasonable and appropriate use of social media websites where this is part of the normal duties of their work. If you are responsible for contributing to our social media activities you should remember that you are representing the College and follow the following rules:

6.1. Only interact on approved platforms about sector developments;

6.2. You must:

- clearly identify yourself, including your name and job title, and use the following disclaimer: 'The views expressed are my own and do not necessarily reflect the views of the College';
- ensure that all communications are of high quality (in terms of content and form) including being grammatically correct, accurate, objectively justifiable, reasonable and appropriate for the intended audience;
- not provide references or recommendations for anyone else on social media (whether employment or business recommendations) in any way that suggests any endorsement or recommendation by the College. If you wish to provide a reference or recommendation, you should seek advice from the Head of Marketing and Communications and ensure that any such reference or recommendation can be withdrawn at any time as we may require;
- if you become aware of adverse criticism of the College, inform the Head of Marketing and Communications. Do not respond without their express approval;
- comply with the terms and conditions and policies of the social media platforms you use;
- maintain good information security practices. Use strong passwords and make appropriate use of security and privacy settings on social media platforms and follow our guidelines and standards;

- seek approval from your line manager before creating or exchanging comments on colleagues, students suppliers or other colleges;
- before you begin communication on a social media platform, evaluate your audience by gaining an insight into the type of content that is published and note any unwritten rules that are followed in discussions;
- Do not use our brands or logos or other identifying material and
- Do not state the College's name, email or other contact details.

We accept that employees may wish to use social media channels as a way of communicating personally with the public and/or friends; however, its use at work should be restricted to the terms of this policy. You are permitted to make reasonable and appropriate use of social media websites from the College's IT network during official rest breaks and/or when between appointments when travelling and/or times when you are not on duty (before and after work).

If you wish to use your own personal devices to access social media websites at work, you should limit use to your official rest breaks and/or when between appointments when travelling and/or times when you are not on duty (before and after work).

Personal use of social media should not interfere with your work duties and responsibilities. Excessive personal use of social media website and abuse of this policy will be considered a disciplinary offence.

7. Expected standards of conduct on social media websites

7.1. Appropriate conduct

You must not use your work email address to sign up for personal social media websites.

You should have no expectation of privacy or confidentiality in anything you create or share on social media platforms. When you create or exchange content using social media you are making a public statement. As such, your content will not be private and can be forwarded to third parties without your consent. You should therefore consider the potential sensitivity of disclosing information (such as health information) to the world. Once sensitive or confidential information (or offensive or defamatory information) has been disclosed, it cannot be recovered, and this may result in liability both for the College and also you personally.

Bear in mind that, even if you are using social media in a personal capacity, other users who are aware of your association with us might reasonably think that you speak on the College's behalf. You should also bear in mind at all times any adverse impact your content might have on our reputation or customer, stakeholder or supplier relationships.

When creating or exchanging content on a social media platform, you must at all times comply with your contract of employment (or other contractual relationship) with us, our disciplinary rules and any of our policies that may be relevant. In particular you must:

- not harass or bully other members of staff OR breach our harassment and bullying policy;
- not discriminate against other members of staff, students or third parties OR breach our equality policy;
- not breach our data protection, internet, email and communications, information security and/or whistleblowing policies;

- respect any confidentiality obligations owed by you or us, and not disclose commercially sensitive material or infringe any intellectual property or privacy rights of the College or any third party;
- not make defamatory or disparaging statements about the College, its staff or students or other colleges;
- not create or exchange or link to abusive, obscene, discriminatory, derogatory, defamatory or pornographic content;
- not upload, post or forward any content belonging to a third party unless you have that third party's consent;
- ensure that any quotes from third party material are accurate;
- check that a third-party website permits you to link to it before including a link and ensure that the link makes clear to the user that the link will take them to the third party's site; and
- not post, upload, forward or post a link to chain mail, junk mail, cartoons, jokes or gossip.
- You should be honest and open but also be mindful of the impact your contribution to a site may have on the perception of the College.
- If you make a mistake in a contribution, be prompt in admitting and correcting it.
- Do not escalate 'heated' discussions. Try to be conciliatory and respectful and quote facts to lower the temperature and correct misrepresentations. Never contribute to a discussion if you are angry or upset; return to it later when you can contribute in a calm and rational manner.
- Avoid discussing topics that may be inflammatory, such as politics or religion.

You should regularly review the privacy settings on your personal social media accounts and appropriately restrict the people who can read your comments. However, even if privacy and security settings are restricted, you should be aware that anything you post on social media sites may be made public by onward transmission.

You should review the content of your personal social media accounts on a regular basis and delete anything that could reflect negatively on you in a professional capacity or on the College.

7.2. Acceptance of friends

The College encourages the positive use of social media as part of the educational process. Social media is used by many people, particularly students to communicate with their peers and the public. Students may wish to form personal relationships with employees, however, to ensure professional boundaries are maintained, you must not accept and/or invite the following individuals to be 'friends' on personal social media accounts or other online services:

- Students of any age,
- ex-students under the age of 18, and
- parents

Entering into such relationships may lead to abuse of an employee's position of trust and breach the standards of professional behaviour and conduct expected by us. The College reserves the right to take disciplinary action if employees are found to be in breach of this policy, with the potential of dismissal for serious breaches.

Acts of a criminal nature or any safeguarding concerns may be referred to the police, Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) and/or the Independent Safeguarding Authority (ISA).

8. Use of social media during recruitment and selection process

The College may view relevant social media websites as part of the pre-employment process, i.e., those aimed specifically at the professional market and used for networking and career development (e.g., LinkedIn). Where we do this, we will act in accordance with our data protection and equal opportunities obligations.

9. Inappropriate conduct and excessive use

We consider this policy to be extremely important. If an employee is found to be in breach of the policy, they will be disciplined in accordance with our disciplinary procedure. In certain circumstances, breach of this policy may be considered gross misconduct, which may lead to immediate termination of employment without notice or payment in lieu of notice. As an alternative, we may withdraw your access to social media platforms via our systems. If you are not an employee, breach of this policy may result in termination of our contract with you.

Employees should note, in particular, that creating or sharing content on a social media platform may amount to misconduct even if it takes place:

- on a personal account with appropriate privacy settings;
- outside normal working hours; and/or
- without using our computers, systems and networks.

Employees who feel that they have been harassed or bullied because of material posted or uploaded by a colleague onto a social media platform should inform their line manager or the Head of HR & Employee Services in accordance with our harassment and bullying or grievance procedure.

10. Responsibilities

The responsibility for drafting, updating, monitoring and reviewing this policy belongs to Human Resources & Employee Services and it will be reviewed at appropriate intervals.

All employees are responsible for complying with the requirements of this policy and for reporting any breaches of the policy to their line manager or Human Resources & Employee Services.

If you have concerns about information or conduct on social media sites that are inappropriate, offensive, demeaning or could be seen to be bullying, please report this to your line manager or Human Resources & Employee Services immediately.

The IT Department is responsible for maintaining the College's computer systems and for supporting employees in the proper usage of the systems.