



Social Media Policy

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Contents

Social Media Policy	3
1.0 Purpose	3
2.0 Principles.....	3
3.0 Scope.....	3
4.0 Roles and responsibilities.....	3
5.0 Social media accounts.....	4
5.1 Corporate accounts.....	4
5.2 Social media in teaching, learning & assessment	4
5.3 Personal accounts	4
5.4 Personal accounts and recruitment.....	5
6.0 Review and Development.....	5
Appendix 1: Examples of social media channels	6
Appendix 2: Associated Policy	7

Social Media Policy

1.0 Purpose

This policy sets out the principles, scope and responsibilities for the governance of social media within the University. The policy aims to ensure a collaborative, supportive and creative social media environment for the University, whilst mitigating security, data protection, reputational and other risks.

2.0 Principles

The University will provide staff with a clear articulation of the institution's expectations around the institutional use of social media via this policy and the associated *Social Media Guidelines*.

The University recognises that staff have a right to private, personal use of social media and affirms that as an employer it will not monitor employees' or prospective employees' social media activity, except in the contexts noted herein.

The University recognises Academic Freedom, whereby staff have freedom within the law to question and test received wisdom; to put forward new ideas, and to state controversial or unpopular opinions, without sanction.

3.0 Scope

The policy applies to all members of the University Court; all members of staff employed by the University; to contractors (including students on temporary contracts) and volunteers, and to individuals with honorary staff status given access to University IT facilities (hereafter referred to as "staff").

The policy applies to all social media channels maintained or hosted by the University. Social media is defined as "websites and applications that enable users to create and share content or to participate in social networking". [Appendix 1](#) provides a non-exhaustive list of examples.

The policy also applies to staff members' behaviour on personal or professional social media accounts where staff have identified themselves as University employees or are acting in a professional context.

4.0 Roles and responsibilities

The roles that carry responsibilities under this policy are as follows:

- The University is legally responsible for its social media, as defined above.
- The Director of External Relations (DoER) has executive authority for all corporate accounts as defined in section 5.0 of this policy.
- Heads of Schools and Directors of Professional Services are responsible for the operation of this policy within their respective areas of responsibility and for promoting compliant social media practices. Heads of School and Directors are supported in their schools / directorates by nominated School Marketing and Communications contacts.

- Staff are responsible for acting in accordance with this policy and its associated *Social Media Guidelines*.
- Various teams within the University have specific responsibility to provide support, training and guidance to staff as defined in the associated *Social Media Guidelines*.

5.0 Social media accounts

5.1 Corporate accounts

A corporate social media account¹ is defined as any account representing a School/institute/research group/team/service or any other area of the institution.

The Directorate of External Relations has executive authority for all corporate accounts, including approving access and the creation, suspension or deletion of accounts, as detailed in the associated *Social Media Guidelines*.

Corporate accounts must follow branding, content and accessibility guidelines.

5.2 Social media in teaching, learning & assessment

The University recognises that the use of social media typically involves a relinquishment of personal privacy in exchange for access to platforms. Therefore, no student or member of staff shall be required to register using their own personal account with an external social media provider in order to access course content, teaching or administrative support. See below for more details.

In exceptional circumstances, where a teaching programme requires the use of a social media and no suitable alternative is available, permission must be sought from the relevant Head of School in consultation with the DoER.

5.3 Personal accounts

The University recognises that many staff use social media in a personal capacity and acknowledges that staff have a right to private, personal use of social media, free from monitoring by their employer.

The University recognises that staff personal social media accounts can also generate professional and institutional benefits; for example, promoting research; making professional contacts; working in communities of interest. Where staff can be recognised as being an employee of the University² they must ensure that their social media presence and behaviour is in accordance with the associated *Social Media Guidelines*.

The University's Social Media Guidelines indicate that if access to School or section level social media accounts is required for editing and monitoring purposes, personal accounts are not to be used and a work-related account is to be generated. The relevant team within DoER will then provide appropriate levels of permissions to the pages and accounts to which you require access.

¹ This definition includes pages and groups which form part of social media channels

² Either by explicitly identifying themselves as an employee of the University, or implying such through the content being shared.

Staff may use their personal social media accounts for work-related purposes during regular hours but must ensure this is for a specific reason (e.g. research). Social media must not affect the ability of staff to perform their regular duties.

Staff using social media in both personal and professional capacities must be mindful of their existing obligations regarding data protection; the security of institutional systems and services; institutionally sensitive data; copyright, and inappropriate content. Further detail is available in [Appendix 2: Associated Policy](#) and the associated *Social Media Guidelines*.

5.4 Personal accounts and recruitment

The University respects prospective employees' privacy and will not monitor such individuals' social media activities. This also supports the University's commitments to ensure that prospective employees' protected characteristics (for example, sexual orientation or religious beliefs) do not influence recruitment decisions.

It is acceptable for University staff to access prospective employees' social media in the following contexts:

- to find candidates (for example, if an individual has put their details on social media for the purpose of attracting prospective employers)
- when the access is directly relevant to the prospective employee's skills, or claims that they have made in their application, e.g.:
 - their CV mentions a blog or claims proficiency in a specific social media channel
 - the prospective employee has provided a publicly available social profile (for example LinkedIn or Twitter) as part of their application

6.0 Review and Development

This policy and the accompanying guidelines shall be reviewed and updated by External Relations in partnership with IT Services and the Policy Review Group as and when required. A formal review including the above parties shall take place annually.

Appendix 1: Examples of social media channels

For the purposes of this policy social media is defined as “websites and applications that enable users to create and share content or to participate in social networking”.

Social media sites and services include (but are not limited to):

- Popular social networks such as Twitter, Facebook, WeChat and Sina Weibo
- Online review websites such as Reevoo and Trustpilot
- Sharing and discussion sites such as Delicious and Reddit
- Photographic social networks such as Snapchat, Flickr and Instagram
- Video sites such as YouTube and Tencent Video
- Short-video apps such as TikTok/DouYin
- Question and answer social networks such as Quora, Zhihu and Yahoo Answers
- Blogs such as WordPress and Blogger
- Professional social networks such as LinkedIn and Meetup
- Online forums such as The Student Room
- Online article sharing platforms such as BuzzFeed and Medium.com

Further guidance on what constitutes social media is available from support staff as detailed in the associated *Social Media Guidelines*.

Appendix 2: Associated Policy

Staff using social media must observe their obligations regarding the following policies, guidelines and statements, all of which are available from the [Policy Zone](#):

- Accessibility and Inclusion in Education (TBC)
- Accessibility Statement
- Data Protection
- Digital Accessibility (TBC)
- Discrimination, Harassment and Bullying in the Workplace
- Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Policy
- Messaging Apps Guidelines (TBC)
- Conditions for using Information Technology Facilities and Code of Practice for Electronic Publishing
- Privacy Policy & Disclaimer

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