

Social Media Policy for Staff

INTRODUCTION

1. Social media is one of the fastest growing trends to hit the Internet. As with all new technology, there are potential opportunities as well as issues with its use. This policy has been put together in an attempt to provide staff with advice and guidance on how to capitalise on some of the opportunities whilst avoiding some of the pitfalls.
2. This policy is intended to ensure that people have a basic understanding of what social media is, provide good practice examples of using social media and provide some simple “dos and don’ts” to ensure that people are protecting themselves, their students and the college as a whole. Staff are reminded that disciplinary action may be taken against staff who, through their activity on social media sites, are seen to have breached other college policies in particular:
 - Anti-harassment, anti-bullying and dignity at work policy;
 - Internet and email guidance policy;
 - Equality and diversity scheme;
 - Staff code of conduct;
 - Young people and vulnerable adults protection policy.
3. The policy is for staff only, and does not cover good-practice use of social media by students. Whilst it is anticipated that curriculum staff will embed social media good-practice if they decide to use social media in teaching and learning, it is important to note that the college may have no effect or pose any constraint on the use of social media outside of the college context for students.
4. This policy should be read in conjunction with the college’s internet and email acceptable use policy that governs the appropriate use of all online systems provided by the college and used within college time.

BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

5. Social media means different things to different people. For some it is the use of messenger services like Microsoft Live Messenger to create ‘micro-societies’ of friends that all chat online in one-to-one or conference groups. For others it is the use of ‘social media applications, such as, Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn, where there is the chance to connect with new friends online, some of whom will never meet in person, but who may share a collective interest or associated friends. For others it is a way to share and comment on images through Instagram and YouTube.
6. They all share a simple common purpose; to allow one or more users to interact and share information in a collaborative manner for the purpose of social and/or business purposes.

7. This policy throughout will refer to social media as any means of communicating and sharing information with one or more people via the use of a website or web-based service. The policy is generally common sense, and a good rule of thumb is to assume that if you have to ask yourself 'should I do this?' before posting something to one of these sites or services, you probably shouldn't!
8. The college has enabled access to such sites through the college's network. Guidance about the appropriate use of such sites for personal use during working hours are provided within the Internet and email acceptable use policy; this states that whilst staff may use the internet and internet based applications, such as social media sites for personal use whilst in college, this usage should be limited to break times and should not impact on the individual's ability to fulfil the requirements of their job role. All of us must act responsibly in our use of the internet for personal use whilst at college.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

9. The following guiding principles have been compiled for reference. Follow them and you shouldn't go far wrong! You can and will only be held responsible for your own actions, you **will not** be held responsible for the actions of others. To make it easier, the policy is broken down into sections for ease of reference.
10. Social media provides great opportunities for organisations and for individuals. In the college's context it provides opportunities to enhance our connection and communication with students and other stakeholders, potentially enriching the teaching and learning experience. More and more our student body and other stakeholders will have an expectation that the college will provide content through a variety of channels including social media.
11. Many staff within the college will already have a personal social media site. Whilst staff members have a right to have such personal online presences, information posted on such sites is potentially accessible to a wide range of individuals. Such information may be accessible to work colleagues and viewable by a whole range of other individuals including students. Content could therefore cause professional embarrassment to the individual or even may bring the individual and the college into disrepute. In addition, material about other people posted on such sites may breach data protection legislation or may be in breach of defamation and libel legislation. As outlined within the staff code of conduct we all have a duty to safeguard our own professional reputations and not do anything that may damage the college's reputation. It doesn't matter where or when content is posted, if it is inappropriate, the college may decide to take disciplinary action. Should such action be deemed necessary by the college, each case will be judged on its individual merits.
12. This policy provides for both instances of the use of social media.

Using social media for teaching and learning

13. The college welcomes the opportunities that the use of social media as a teaching and learning aid can bring. There are some examples already across the college of how such applications have enriched the learning experience. The college will share good practice where it exists and provide support, through the college's learning resources and marketing teams, for staff wishing to establish an online presence for teaching and learning.
14. The college has a duty of care to its students, particularly those students who are under the age of 18 and/or vulnerable adults.

Safeguarding the wellbeing of all our students is of paramount importance and must be taken into consideration when utilising such sites for college business. This policy has been drafted with these considerations in mind.

- Please register the use of social media sites with the college's Head of Marketing, Web and Learner Engagement. This will enable us to keep a cross college record of all sites and, where appropriate, share good practice.
- You should take responsibility for moderating all content that is posted on the site. Set yourself up as the administrator so that you are able to remove inappropriate content quickly. Content should not cause anyone any offence or in anyway discriminate against others.
- Make sure that the site settings on applications such as Facebook are 'private'
- Consider carefully whether open access blogs are appropriate – remember that these sites are 'public' and as such content and comment can be viewed by anyone.
- When posting content on sites such as You Tube, consider whether the material is appropriate and does not in any way damage the college's reputation – again remember that content is public and can be viewed by anyone. Consider whether you need the permission of individuals featured in pictures or video before posting them.
- As the moderator be aware of 'cyber bullying' – there have been instances of individuals using these sites to bully or harass others.
- Remember copyright legislation when posting content. Do not use music, video, written information or pictures that may be copyrighted.
- Do not disclose third party data about a colleague or learner as this may be in breach of data protection.
- It is probably safest to establish sites for tightly controlled groups of students (i.e. a course group), this way you will be able to manage content more easily and make sure that all people with access to site are genuine.
- When accepting students or colleagues onto sites as 'friends' make sure you know that they are genuine students or members of college staff before accepting them.

Using social media for other college business activity

15. Social media has potential equal benefits as a communication tool for non teaching and learning purposes. The college's marketing team oversee a range of corporate social media presences primarily to engage learners and other stakeholders.
16. Similar considerations apply to other social media presences that teams may wish to establish to facilitate enhanced communication. Policy for the use of such systems for teaching and learning are equally valid for other uses. The following should be taken into account.

- As a general rule of thumb if you are establishing such systems to take feedback or comment from customer, expect both positive and negative comments. Negative comments are not in themselves an issue on such sites, rather it is the way we deal with them that will enhance or detract from the college's reputation.
- Individuals posting content onto such system expect almost instant response; think about whether you have the time to monitor such systems on a regular basis.
- Do not speak from a position of authority on behalf of the college – if you are unsure about how to respond to posts, check first. Providing wrong information is worse than providing no information at all!
- Do not post confidential, personal or any other sensitive information on such sites. Remember our responsibility for data protection and confidentiality.

Using social media sites for personal use

17. Staff are entitled to a personal and social life; a large part of some individuals' life outside of college may be the use of social media. However it is possible that information posted on such sites about private lives may become public and accessible to the widest range of individuals including students and college customers. Should compromising information be posted on such sites it may significantly damage our professional relationship with students and potentially bring the college into disrepute. The following should help staff in managing their personal social media presences. It is worth remembering that any of your actions may bring the college into disrepute and may be a breach of college policy that could lead to disciplinary action being taken.
- Think about whether you want work colleagues included on your social media sites as friends. Some colleagues may take exception to some of the content posted on such sites and could make a complaint about you because of it. Use your own judgement as to whom you associate with online; remember that your public friends list and comments are just that, public.
 - Do not publish or allow to be published content (including images) that could damage your professional reputation.
 - Remember that some sites are public and therefore accessible to anyone who wishes to see it. Take extra care with these kinds of sites in terms of images and content.
 - The safest way to manage your personal social media sites is to set it to personal, so that you have absolute control over who are allowed on as friends and who can see the content posted.
 - Before posting content, ask yourself would I say this to the person's face – if the answer is no then it is probably safer not to put it in writing on such a site.
 - Think about comments that you post on such sites and they may bring the college into disrepute or damage the college's reputation.

- As a general rule of thumb don't allow students as friends onto these sites. However we do recognise that in a college environment, this may not always be possible – in such cases be extra cautious about content posted.
- Before posting images of yourself or colleagues ask yourself whether you would be comfortable with these images being distributed across the organisation, again if the answer is no it is probably wiser not to post them.
- Be aware that images/content that you post onto your social media presences can be shared with others even if your profile is set to private.
- Never give your college email address as the contact for such sites, you can establish Google mail, hotmail or yahoo mail accounts for free for such purposes.

Further information and guidance

Further information and guidance is available from:

Your local union stewards
The college's web team
The college's learning resources team
Your line manager