



## **Social Media – Guidance for Managers**

### **Purpose of Notes**

The purpose of these notes is to provide managers with guidance on the acceptable and effective use of social media, both personally and at work, as well as information on dealing with potential misuse.

The University believes that members of staff should be permitted and enabled to use social media at work, in accordance with our policy and guidelines. Social media can present members of staff with significant benefits. Social media can have a positive impact on individual's ability to do their job, from presenting learning opportunities, building and maintaining professional relationships, and making connections across the industry and professions. However, it is important to ensure that the use of social media does not negatively impact the university, students or other members of staff.

### **Advice before using social media**

For advice on using social media, terminology, useful tools, developing a social media strategy and examples of good social media practice, please see [additional resources](#) from Communications and Marketing on StaffNet.

Prior to using social media for any purpose, it is recommended that staff familiarise themselves with the platforms they intend to use and ensure they understand the basic functionality and etiquette.

### **General Advice**

Always keep in mind that social media platforms are a public space accessible by staff, managers, stakeholders and members of the public. Whilst social media platforms provide options around privacy

settings, information can be copied and redistributed. Nothing shared via social media can ever be kept truly private.

Staff are required under their contract of employment to give due regard to the interests of the University, and this also applies to social media use.

When using social media for any purpose, staff should consider the following:

- Protecting your reputation and professionalism – consider carefully the content that you post / share and who you engage with.
- Being transparent and honest. Declare any vested interests. It is acceptable to say that you work for the University but always be clear that you are expressing your own views and not those of the University.
- Consider confidentiality – never post any information that could be confidential or proprietary. Never discuss any sensitive information about the University, its students or staff. Respect copyright and the data protection regulations.
- Being respectful of others. Do not post information that could be seen as offensive, sensitive or inflammatory. Do not use inappropriate language. Remember our policies on dignity at work.

### **Personal Use of Social Media**

When it comes to specifically using social media for personal use, staff should consider the following:

- Making it clear as necessary and depending on the platform that views expressed are personal and do not represent the University.
- Not saying anything that might bring the University into disrepute.
- Ensuring that social media (including frequency of use) use does not impact on the individual's role and commitments to the University.
- Ensuring that any use, even outside of work or on personal devices, still meets with the values and standards of the University.
- Correcting any mistakes promptly.

In respect of specifically discussing the University on any social media platform, (including blogging about any work related topics) staff are advised that they should not use University logos without

permission, must not imply that they are speaking on behalf of the University, nor share any inappropriate content. University images or visuals owned by the University should not be used without permission.

## **Cyber Bullying**

Cyber bullying is any form of bullying, harassment or victimisation online, including emails, messaging platforms, social networking sites or via mobile phones.

Cyber bullying is no different to any form of bullying; the behaviour and impact can be the same. Similarly, the intention of the bullying is not relevant, but the impact on the recipient.

It is important to be aware that some cyber bullying can amount to a criminal offence under a range of different legislation, including (but not limited to); Computer Misuse Act 1990, Malicious Communications Act 1988, Protection from Harassment Act 1997 and Communications Act 2003.

As with all other forms of bullying, cyber bullying is dealt with via the Dignity at Work Policy and Procedure. The Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Team can be contacted for further advice and sources of support.

Bullying may result in action being taken under the Disciplinary Procedure. It is irrelevant for these purposes whether or not the cyber bullying takes place during working hours or via the use of University IT systems.

ACAS have produced a short video on cyber bullying which you can watch [here](#).

## **Staying Safe on Social Media**

This guidance is provided for all staff in order to support them in staying safe whilst using social media platforms.

- Consider your privacy settings for each social networking platform that you use. You may wish to restrict access to people you know and trust.
- Take care when discussing your whereabouts.

- Use robust (and different) passwords for each social networking platform that you use.
- Consider carefully the personal information included in social media profiles. For example, if you include your birthday it may be easy to work out your date of birth – a key piece of information used to identify you.
- Always remember that people on social media may not be who they say they are. Exercise caution, especially in terms of sharing personal information.

### **Examples of Inappropriate Use**

In order to determine whether content posted on social media is a breach of our policy, an investigation would need to be carried out. This section is intended to be indicative to assist managers – more advice can be taken from Human Resources.

*A member of staff states on public social media platform that they strongly disagree with University strategy.*

Not generally a breach of our policy.

*A member of staff states on public social media platform that they disagree with a specific individual at the University.*

Not generally a breach of policy.

*A member of staff states that they disagree with a specific individual at the University, but includes name calling or offensive language.*

Potential breach of policy.

*A member of staff has a social media account clearly identifying them as a member of staff, and posts negative comments about students.*

Potential breach of policy.

*A member of staff who does not expressly identify themselves as working for the University, but uses public social media platforms to share racist or homophobic content, and that content is seen by students, potential students or colleagues.*

Potential breach of policy.

*A member of staff is in a private social media group with other colleagues that is used to share discuss other colleagues, that is then brought to the attention of other staff.*

Potential breach of policy.

*A member of staff states on a social media platform that they don't like their job.*

Not usually a breach of policy, unless accompanied by other inappropriate language or content.

*A member of staff uses social media to contact other members of staff in a way that could cause harassment or distress, e.g. sending messages suggesting a relationship.*

Potential breach of policy.

*Using personal social media accounts for research.*

Potential breach of policy.

## **Frequently Asked Questions**

*What should I do if I see or become aware of inappropriate social media activity by a member of staff?*

In the first instance, discuss the matter with your manager, who may seek advice from Human Resources or the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion team as necessary.

*I have seen someone making negative comments about the University on social media sites. Should I respond?*

Depending on the nature of the comment or the forum, it may not be appropriate for you to respond in a personal capacity. It is best to refer the matter to the most appropriate department or manager. This could be Human Resources or Marketing and Communications.

*Another member of staff is bullying me through social media. Who can I talk to?*

You can raise this issue through our policies on Dignity at Work, or through our online facility 'Report and Support', available on StaffNet. You may also approach the alleged perpetrator yourself informally to tell them that the behaviour is offensive and unwelcome, you may request mediation, or you may submit a formal complaint. Keep all relevant evidence, as it may be required during any investigation into the facts. You can also talk to Human Resources for advice at any time.

*I have become aware that a member of staff is talking about working at the University in their blog. What should I do about it?*

Any member of staff who references the University on any social media should make it clear that the views expressed are their own, and they are not representing the views of the University. Any comments or posts should not bring the University into disrepute. If you believe that these rules have been breached, please contact Human Resources for advice.

*I am interviewing for a new appointment. Can I look at the applicant's social media profiles?*

If a candidate has included links to their social media profiles (such as previous work or a blog) in their application then it would be reasonable for you to review them. Reviewing profiles on professional networking sites such as LinkedIn is also acceptable as their purpose is to demonstrate experience and skills. However, generally we do not allow managers to review social media activity that is of a personal nature, nor should they attempt to access information that is clearly intended to be private. Any recruitment decision influenced by knowledge gained about a candidate based upon information shared on social media could be potentially discriminatory.

*Members of my team are spending excessive amounts of time using social media at work. What should I do about it?*

You should treat potential timewasting on social media in the same way you would any other potential misconduct issue. Consider whether the matter can be dealt with by way of an informal conversation, and record this for your own records. It may be appropriate to ensure that your team understands University standards and expectations – in this case the Social Media Policy. If the matter is more serious or continues, then consider whether a formal investigation is required under the Disciplinary Policy. Take advice from Human Resources if required.

*I haven't received a complaint, but I have become aware of some inappropriate behaviour on social media that could amount to bullying. What should I do?*

It is important to take prompt action. We have a duty of care to our members of staff, but prompt action will also prevent the problem from escalating. If appropriate, raise the matter with the individual concerned. It may be appropriate to commence an investigation. Seek advice from Human Resources

or the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion team. Issues could also be sent to the Report and Support function on the EDI website, anonymously if required.