

Social Media (Staff) Policy

1 Introduction

- 1.1 The University of Manchester ('University') recognises and embraces the benefits and opportunities that social media can bring. It can be used to share news, information and successes, publicise research, keep staff and students up to date with important developments and promote healthy academic debate about subjects and areas of research and teaching.
- 1.2 The University understands that the majority of staff and students will be using social media in one form or another, whether personally, professionally or both. This policy provides information to staff on how to use social media appropriately and effectively, both personally and for work-related purposes.
- 1.3 The University encourages staff to engage, collaborate, learn and innovate through social media, whilst being aware of the potential impact on staff, students and the University if it is used inappropriately.

2 Scope

- 2.1 This policy applies to all staff of the University (including casual workers and honorary appointments) and to all communications on social media which directly or indirectly represent or impact upon the University, its staff and/or students.
- 2.2 This policy applies to social media communications made at any time, in any language, whether privately or publicly, including outside of normal working hours, and from anywhere, including away from campus, whether to an individual, to a limited group or to the world. For the purposes of this policy, private use of social media means use of social media intended to be shared with a limited number of individuals (such as a private group, or one-to-one communication) but has nevertheless become more generally known or accessible.

- 2.3 This policy does not form any part of any contract of employment and may be amended at any time.

3 Definitions

- 3.1 The term 'social media' refers to interactions amongst people in which they create, share or exchange information and ideas in virtual communities and/or networks. Social media technologies can take many forms including internet forums, blogs, micro blogging, wikis, social networks, podcasts, picture sharing, vlogs, music-sharing, crowdsourcing, internet messaging and any website that allows public commenting or posting. These examples are not exhaustive.

4 Roles and responsibilities

- 4.1 All staff are responsible for:

- reading and taking the time to ensure that they understand this policy;
- ensuring that any use of social media (professionally and personally) is carried out in line with this and other relevant policies, including the IT [Acceptable Use Policy](#);
- completing any relevant training as required;
- ensuring that relevant guidelines are followed; and
- reporting any incidents or concerns regarding social media use to their manager, supervisor or the Social Media Co-Ordinator in Division of [Marketing and Communications](#) or the local [HR Partner](#).

- 4.2 All managers are responsible for:

- reporting and escalating any incidents or concerns regarding social media as appropriate;
- authorising University-related social media posts where designated;
- completing relevant training as required, as well as ensuring their staff are appropriately trained where required, and
- addressing any issues of misuse of social media by those staff for whom they are responsible.

- 4.3 All University-branded social media account owners (official and unofficial) are responsible for:

- completing any relevant training as required;

- operating accounts appropriately, and in accordance with this policy and relevant guidelines;
- seeking relevant authorisation for official University posts where required;
- putting in place appropriate security on accounts including password management;
- ensuring that accounts have up to date content;
- responding to comments; and
- closing down unused accounts.

5 General Principles

- 5.1 The University recognises that staff have a general freedom to express their views and opinions, and from time to time these may include views that are in conflict to those of the University. There may also be occasions where this may include criticism of the University.
- 5.2 All communications on social media must be made in accordance with this policy.
- 5.3 Staff are personally responsible for what they communicate on or through social media and they must adhere to the standards of behaviour set out in this policy and any related policies.
- 5.4 Staff have a responsibility to represent the University accurately and fairly in any online space and are expected to uphold the values of the University.
- 5.5 Use of social media must not infringe the rights, or privacy, of staff, students and/or third parties.
- 5.6 Nothing in this policy is intended to have the effect of limiting either freedom of speech within the law or academic freedom which are expressed in accordance with the rights and obligations set out in the [Code of Practice on Freedom of Speech](#).
- 5.7 All use of social media must comply with relevant University policies, including in relation to dignity at work and study, data protection and acceptable IT usage. This list is not exhaustive.
- 5.8 Staff may also need to comply with social media guidance issued by relevant regulatory bodies (for example, the General Medical Council) and, where applicable, should familiarise themselves and comply with such guidance.
- 5.9 There are a number of pieces of legislation relevant to the use of social media and these are listed in Appendix A. Staff should be mindful of these acts in particular.
- 5.10 The following are examples of content that is considered to be of an unacceptable nature and should never be posted:

- any confidential information about the University and its associated entities, including subsidiary companies;
- any confidential information (which may include research not yet in the public domain, indications of forthcoming developments or funding bids, data or software code, information about colleagues or personnel matters, trade secrets, minutes, details of unresolved grievances, non-public or not yet approved documents, news or information);
- any University copyright materials, including all those owned by the University relating to teaching and learning;
- the work of someone else without obtaining permission from the owner to do so and, where appropriate, crediting the author;
- confidential business strategy, intellectual property, management plans, management forecasting or plans for innovation not in the public domain;
- details of internal complaints and/or legal proceedings involving the University and/or any current or former student(s) or staff of the University where such sharing will breach data protection legislation or subvert due process;
- personal information about another individual, including contact information, without their express permission;
- content that could be discriminatory, intimidating, offensive, threatening or amount to bullying or harassment;
- content posted to impersonate colleagues, University accounts, students and/or third parties related to the University;
- content which includes University trademarks, including logos or the trademarks of third parties, such as those of University stakeholders without obtaining the necessary permissions from Marketing and Communications or the Legal Team.

This list is not exhaustive.

6 Using social media as a teaching and learning tool

- 6.1 The University recognises that social learning tools are increasingly being used as a teaching resource to enhance and develop the curriculum and respond to learner expectations. It is not the intention of this policy to limit such innovation but to ensure that where social media is used for these purposes it is done so appropriately and professionally.

- 6.2 The use of social media in learning should adhere to this policy and the University social media guidelines available [here](#).

7 University-related social media use

- 7.1 The University acknowledges that some of its staff use the University name and logo on social media as a form of communication with other staff and students (for example, societies, clubs and networks, and for recruitment purposes for research projects). Further guidance on the use of social media in this context can be found [here](#).
- 7.2 Staff who wish to set up or continue to use a social media account which appears to represent the University (for example it uses the University's name but is not an official account), or operates from an RSS feed associated with the University, should seek prior approval from the Division of Communications and Marketing. Approval will be given at the discretion of the University. Where applicable, approval may also be required from the appropriate ethical research body such as a Divisional / School panel or University Research Ethics Committee (UREC).
- 7.3. Should a social media account or advertisement no longer be required, the owner of the account or the staff member who posted the advertisement must take the appropriate steps to close the account or remove the advertisement.
- 7.4 Content should be regularly monitored and updated. Content should also be monitored to ensure that it remains current, and old material is removed as appropriate.
- 7.5 Permission must be sought from the Head of Department before access to a University-managed account is provided to students.

8 Personal social media use

- 8.1 The University acknowledges that its staff may use social media in their personal lives and for personal communications. Personal communications are those made on, or from, a personal social media account unrelated to working or studying at the University. The use of personal social media is subject to this policy.

- 8.2 When using social media in a personal context, staff are still expected to uphold University values, respect other employees, students and stakeholders, and protect confidentiality, privacy and security.
- 8.3 When expressing personal views, staff should make it clear where necessary that they are not communicating the views of the University, nor do anything that might reasonably create the impression that they are communicating on behalf of the University.
- 8.4 Staff are reminded that other members of staff and/or students may see their activity on social media. Even when privacy settings are used, there is no guarantee that posts cannot be copied or shared.
- 8.5 The University has well-established grievance and dignity at work procedures for staff to raise any dissatisfaction or concerns that they may have in relation to their employment or studies. Relevant concerns must be raised through such procedures, and not through social media.
- 8.6 Staff should also be aware that they are personally responsible for all communications which they publish on social media. If a member of staff is uncertain or concerned about the appropriateness of any statement or posting, they should refrain from posting it until they have discussed it with their manager, academic advisor or supervisor.
- 8.7 Personal use of social media during working hours should not be excessive or interfere with a member of staff's role or commitment to the University. Local rules may also apply to the use of personal social media during working hours. The University reserves the right to restrict access to social media sites if it deems it necessary to do so.

9 Intellectual property

- 9.1 Staff must ensure that they have permission to share any University or third-party owned intellectual property, including but not limited to all images, photographs, text and videos, before uploading them to, or linking to them via, social media and, where sharing is permitted, should ensure that such materials or shared links are accredited appropriately. For more information see the [Intellectual Property Policy](#) or (for third party content) the [Copyright Policy](#).
- 9.2 Staff are free to share University or third party content if they have permission or it has been made generally available without restrictions.

- 9.2 Staff should be aware that under the terms and conditions of a social media platform, by posting content, ownership rights and control of the content may be transferred to the platform. As such, care should be taken before posting any University or third-party owned intellectual property on social media, whether or not have relevant permission have been provided.
- 9.3 The University is not responsible for, nor does it hold any ownership of, any content posted by its staff other than content appropriately posted by staff using University accounts.

10 Recruitment of Staff

- 10.1 Social media can provide useful information during recruitment and selection processes, particularly where prospective candidates use social media professionally. Personal or private social media activities of prospective staff will not be looked at as part of the recruitment and selection process; however, where a candidate uses social media professionally or has explicitly mentioned the use of social media in their application or CV (e.g., by providing a LinkedIn profile or web address), social media may be reviewed and considered.

11 Research

- 11.1 If social media is being used for research recruitment purposes, this must be made explicitly clear.
- 11.2 When using a social media account for research recruitment purposes, users must follow the appropriate recruitment guidelines such as not targeting specific individuals, but rather providing an advertisement for a research study and asking participants to contact the researchers directly should they be interested in participating. All recruitment advertising must strictly adhere to the guidance set forth by [UREC](#) and must be approved as part of the ethical review process.
- 11.3 Personal social media accounts should not be used for research recruitment purposes. Researchers should ensure that study specific social media accounts are created and used for these purposes. In accordance with best practice, researchers should not use their personal social media accounts to obtain data to be used for research purposes. Although data on social media may be in the public domain, researchers should ensure that they follow best practice guidelines and where possible obtain consent from participants to use their data for research

purposes or utilise data mining software to obtain and anonymise data from the wider population. In respect of private / closed social media groups (where individuals must obtain permission from the group administrators to view and contribute to group content) explicit consent must be sought from the group administrator as well as group members in order to use any data for research purposes.

12 Monitoring

- 12.1 No member of staff is permitted as a matter of routine to monitor or investigate an individual's use of social media. However, where there are legitimate grounds to suspect unacceptable use, the University may monitor or investigate the use of social media where that information is in the public domain.
- 12.2 Where excessive or inappropriate use of social media is suspected, the University may take further action, such as commence a formal investigation in accordance with its disciplinary policies and procedures.

13 Data Protection Legislation and Freedom of Information Act 2000

- 13.1 Data protection legislation applies equally to social media as it does in other contexts. Staff must ensure that all posts comply with relevant data protection legislation and the University's Data Protection Policy.
- 13.2 No personal information should be shared on social media without the consent of the individual to whom it relates. Staff should therefore never post other staff, students' or a third party personal information without consent. This may also potentially be a criminal offence, liable to prosecution by the Information Commissioner's Office.
- 13.3 The Freedom of Information Act 2000 may apply to posts and content uploaded to official University websites, or any other website belonging to a public authority. As such, if a request for such information is received by the University, content uploaded to University social media accounts may be disclosed.

14 Reporting issues

- 14.1 Where staff are in receipt, or become aware, of offensive or unacceptable content on or through social media, this should be reported to their manager in the first instance. Advice may also be sought from Human Resources.
- 14.2 Reporting can also take place via the Equality Diversity and Inclusion Report and Support facility. In the event that staff feel that they are being harassed via social media, they may also contact a Harassment Support Advisor. More information can be found [here](#).

15 Inappropriate Use of Social Media

- 15.1 Where a breach of this policy is reported, the University will review the circumstances and decide on the most appropriate and proportionate course of action, which may include disciplinary action, following an investigation in accordance with the University Disciplinary Policy and Procedure. Serious breaches of this policy may be considered to be serious / gross misconduct.
- 15.2 Disciplinary action may be taken regardless of whether the breach is committed during working hours or not and regardless of whether any University equipment or facilities are used in committing the breach or not.
- 15.3 Any member of staff who is suspected of committing a breach of this policy will be required to cooperate with any investigation.
- 15.4 The University may also require staff to remove any social media content that it considers to be a breach of this policy. Failure to do so may result in disciplinary action.

Document control box	
Policy / Procedure title:	Social Media (Staff) Policy
Date updated:	March 2019
Approving body:	HR Sub Committee
Version:	1
Supersedes:	N/A
Previous review dates:	N/A
Next review date:	March 2020
Equality impact outcome:	Medium
Related Statutes, Ordinances, General Regulations:	State XIII, Part III: Disciplinary Procedures Regulation XVII and XVIII
Related policies:	Acceptable Use Policy – IT Services and Facilities Disciplinary and Dismissal Procedure – Support Staff Dignity at Work or Study Policies and Procedures
Related procedures:	
Related guidance and or codes of practice:	
Related information:	
Policy owner:	Human Resources
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Appendix A - Legislation relevant to the use of social media.

Staff and students should be mindful of the following legal risks and acts in particular:

- Defamation: posting untrue content adversely affecting a person's or organisation's reputation, which has caused, or is likely to cause, harm.
- Malicious falsehood: posting untrue and damaging content with an improper motive, resulting in financial loss for the subject.
- Harassment: subjecting someone to a course of conduct that causes them distress or alarm, including stalking, trolling and cyber bullying.
- Intellectual property infringement: posting content which copies a substantial part of work protected by copyright.
- Breach of confidence: posting confidential information.
- Malicious Communications Act 1998: prevents conveying a threat, a grossly offensive or indecent message or false information with the intention to cause distress or anxiety to the reader or recipient.
- Section 127 Communications Act 2003: prevents the use of public electronic communications equipment to send a message that is false, grossly offensive, or of an indecent, obscene or menacing character, whether received by the intended recipient or not.
- Computer Misuse Act 1990: prevents the unauthorised access, modification and use of computer material or the use of a computer to assist in a criminal offence, including accessing confidential information and thereby impersonating another person through social media.