

# Staff Social Media Policy



Teaching Intensive Research Informed

## 1. Scope

- 1.1 This policy applies to all staff, including sessional staff, student staff, casual and temporary staff, and is intended to cover all social media activities which directly or indirectly identifies or discusses the University and/or its staff and students.
- 1.2 This policy applies to all professional and personal social media communications made at any time, whether privately or publicly and from anywhere including off campus on personal devices or on campus using University devices and/or network.

## 2. Introduction

- 2.1 For the purposes of this policy, 'social media' refers to the dissemination of information including (without limitation) text, images, videos, blogs and audio on platforms ranging from Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn, Flickr, WhatsApp and YouTube to blogs and other emerging networks.
- 2.2 The University acknowledges that social media may be used by staff during their time at the University as a useful tool for communication. Staff have a responsibility to represent the University in a fair and accurate manner and to uphold the reputation of the University. Social misuse can cause reputational, legal and ethical issues.

## 3. Policy Statement

- 3.1 The University recognises and embraces the benefits and opportunities that social media can bring as a tool. The University encourages you to engage, collaborate and innovate through social media; however, wherever and however you do this, you must be aware of the potential impact on both you and the University.
- 3.2 The University recognises that its staff use social media as a form of professional communication, through official University websites and accounts and/or by using the University name and logo. All professional communications are within the scope of this policy.
- 3.3 The University acknowledges that staff may use social media in their private lives for personal communications from a private social media account. In all cases where a private social media account is used which identifies the University, it must be made clear that the views expressed on or through that social media account do not represent the views of the University.

## 4. Roles and Responsibilities

### 4.1 All staff are responsible for:

- ensuring that any use of social media is carried out in line with this and other relevant policies and guidance;
- ensuring that the terms and conditions of the social media platform are consistent with the University's intellectual property policy;
- informing the Communications Department when an institutional account is to be used;
- regularly monitoring, updating and managing content that they have posted;
- ensuring they have read, understood and agreed to terms of use before accessing and posting content on social media in a teaching and learning context;
- adding an appropriate disclaimer to personal accounts when the institution is named; and
- reporting any incidents or concerns, as detailed in section 11,
- reporting any content or views posted by a member of the University community that incites people to commit acts of terrorism or violent extremism.

### 4.2 All line managers and academic staff are responsible for:

- addressing any concerns and/or questions arising out of the use of social media including those regarding posts or comments;
- reporting and escalating matters as appropriate;
- authorising posts where designated; and
- attending additional relevant training.

### 4.3 All Staff must inform the Communications Department before creating a social media account which in any way represents the University.

This should be done in writing and include an outline for intended use and members of staff who will have access to this account.

## 5. University Accounts

**Please read carefully before setting up a University account or if already in ownership of one.**

### 5.1 All staff must inform the Communications Department before creating a social media account which in any way represents the University.

This should be done in writing and include an outline for intended use and members of staff who will have access to this account.

### 5.2 Staff must not, under any circumstances, give out login and password information without the prior consent of the University's Communications Department.

### 5.3 Passwords should be updated bi-monthly with the Communications Department having a record of all account login and passwords.

### 5.4 In relation to specific department accounts, one member of staff will take responsibility for monitoring all publicised material. It shall be their duty to inform the Communications Department of any issue arising from this account.

## **6. Freedom of Speech and Academic Freedom**

Nothing in this policy is intended to have the effect of limiting either freedom of speech within the law or academic freedom.

## **7. Expected Standards of Behaviour**

- 7.1 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 or guidance.
- 7.2 All communications on social media must be professional and respectful at all times in accordance with this policy. Use of social media must not infringe on the rights, or privacy of staff or students and staff must not make inappropriate comments or judgments about other staff, students or third parties.
- 7.3 Staff may also need to comply with social media guidance issued by relevant regulatory bodies and, where applicable, should familiarise themselves and comply with such guidance.
- 7.4 Social media content must not refer to, or include, information that is in conflict with or jeopardises the University's interests, is in any way inconsistent with an individual's contractual duties to the University or is in pursuance of unauthorised commercial activities.
- 7.5 The following are examples of content that is considered to be of an unacceptable nature and should never be posted:
  - inappropriate or discriminatory comments regarding the University;
  - material that could be deemed to be threatening, harassing, discriminatory, illegal, obscene, defamatory, libellous or hostile towards any individual, group or entity;
  - sexist, racist, or homophobic views;
  - illegal activities or organisations;
  - content that infringes or violates someone else's rights;
  - content of a violent extremist or terrorist nature or which incites people to commit acts of terrorism or violent extremism;
  - content that could create a security risk for the University, its staff or students;
  - any confidential information about the University and its associated entities including subsidiary companies;
  - any commercially confidential information;
  - business strategy, intellectual property or plans for innovation;
  - trade secrets;
  - details of complaints and/or legal proceedings;
  - misleading information;
  - the work of someone else without obtaining permission;
  - personal information about another individual, including contact information, without their express permission;
  - spam;
  - comments using fake accounts or using another person's name; and
  - anything which may bring the University into disrepute.

- 7.6 Do not enter dialogue with members of the press or media unless authorised to do so as part of your role. Please forward all relevant enquiries to the Communications Department.
- 7.7 Staff should be aware that innocently intended comments posted on social media may be misconstrued.
- 7.8 The University has well-established ways for staff to raise any dissatisfaction or concerns that they may have. Concerns must be raised through such procedures, not on social media.

## **8. Intellectual Property**

- 8.1 All staff must ensure that they have permission to share any third party materials before uploading them to social media and, where sharing is permitted, should ensure that such materials or shared links are credited appropriately.
- 8.2 All staff must check the terms and conditions of a social media account and/or website before uploading material to it; by posting material to social media accounts and/or websites, you may be releasing ownership rights and control of the content.
- 8.3 The University is not responsible for, nor does it hold any ownership, of any content posted by its staff, other than content posted by staff using University accounts, or in the course of their duties, as a form of professional communication.

## **9. Monitoring**

- 8.1 The University reserves the right, within the law, to monitor, intercept and review, without notice, staff and student activities using its IT resources and communications systems, including but not limited to social media postings, to ensure that its rules are being complied with and such activities are for legitimate purposes.
- 8.2 The use of social media whilst at work and study may be monitored by the University. Where excessive use of social media is suspected, the University may take further action.

## **10. Data Protection Act 1998 and Freedom of Information Act 2000**

- 10.1 The Data Protection Act 1998 ('the Act') applies to social media as it does in other contexts. You must ensure that all posts comply with the Act and the University Data Protection Policy.
- 10.2 No personal information, including photographs and videos should be shared on social media without the consent of the individual to whom it relates. Staff should, therefore, never post other staff and/or student's and/or a third party's personal information without consent.
- 10.3 The Freedom of Information Act 2000 may apply to posts and content that you have 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 (or other public authority), the content that you have posted may be disclosed.

## **11. Reporting an Incident**

- 11.1 Where a breach of this policy is reported, the University will review the circumstances and decide on the most appropriate course of action, which may include referring the matter to be dealt with under a different procedure.
- 11.2 If a student wishes to report an incident which has occurred on social media relating to staff, students or the University, they should refer to the complaints procedure which can be accessed on the University website.
- 11.3 If a member of staff wishes to make a complaint regarding a breach of this policy they should raise the issue with their line manager or Human Resources in the first instance or formally via the internal grievance procedure.

## **12. Consequences for Breach of this Policy**

- 12.1 Any breach of this policy may result in disciplinary action up to and including dismissal or exclusion/termination of registration regardless of whether the breach is committed during working hours and regardless of whether any University equipment or facilities are used in committing the breach.
- 12.2 Any member of staff who is suspected of committing a breach of this policy will be required to co-operate with any investigation which may involve handing over relevant passwords and log in details.
- 12.3 Where conduct is considered to be illegal, the University will report the matter to the police.

## **13. Equality Impact Assessment**

The University of Bolton is committed to the promotion of equality, diversity and a supportive environment for all members of our community. Our commitment to equality and diversity means that this policy has been screened in relation to the use of plain English, the promotion of the positive duty in relation to the protected characteristics of race, sex, disability, age, sexual orientation, religion or belief, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity.

## **14. Other Related Policies and Procedures**

- Data Protection Policy  
<http://www.bolton.ac.uk/AboutUs/Resources/DataProtectionAct.pdf>
- Freedom of Information Policy  
<http://www.bolton.ac.uk/Freedom/Home.aspx>
- Intellectual Property Policy  
<https://www.bolton.ac.uk/Students/PoliciesProceduresRegulations/AllStudents/Documents/IntellectualPropertyRights.pdf>
- Acceptable Use Policy  
<http://www.bolton.ac.uk/ITSupportServices/About-Us/Home.aspx>
- Information Security Policy

## 15. Monitoring and Review

15.1 Overall responsibility for the policy implementation rests with the Vice Chancellor. However, all staff are obliged to adhere to, support and implement this policy.

15.2 This policy will be reviewed and updated on a regular basis.

## 16. Dissemination of and Access to the Policy

This policy will be available on the University of Bolton Governance website. Hardcopies will be available in the Vice Chancellor's Office, Human Resources Department, Directorate of Institutional Advancement and all School and Support Offices.

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Policy Owner (Group/Centre/Unit)	Directorate of Institutional Advancement
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