Staff Use of Social Media Policy

Purpose and Context

This policy provides advice and guidance to members of staff using social media either as part of their professional role at the University or in a private capacity.

Scope

This policy applies to all University staff and to all communications on social media which directly or indirectly represent or impact upon the University, its staff and/or students.

1   Introduction

1.1   The use of social media is an important means of communication both to enhance the profile of the University and the professional profile of individuals. This policy is intended to advise and assist members of staff using social media either as part of their professional role at the University or in a private capacity. They are not intended to restrict scholarly, academic or pedagogic use of the media. Neither are they intended to restrict what members of staff say or do in a personal capacity, nor prevent members of staff from expressing critical comment.

1.2   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.

1.3   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   Person and Professional use of social media

2.1   This policy applies to the use of social media by staff:

   o   In their personal capacity, where they or the content of the post can be linked to the University or their connection with the University; or

   o   For professional purposes e.g. "in the name of the University" where staff are taken to be representing the University.

2.2   When using social media for personal use, members of staff should state that they are speaking on their own behalf, and the views expressed are their own.

2.3   Members of staff should only use a university account for work purposes. If individuals disclose their affiliation with the University on their personal social media, they must state that their views do not represent those of the University. Use of personal social media should be outside of working hours, or during breaks.

2.4   Members of staff using social media as part of their role are representing the University. Members of staff should therefore make clear that they work at the University, use their real name and be clear about their role. If an individual is identified as a member of the University they need to ensure that their content and tone is consistent with their role at work.

3   Guidance on the use of social media

3.1   All communications on social media must be made in accordance with this policy.

3.2   Staff are personally responsible for what they communicate on or post via social media and have a responsibility to represent the University accurately and fairly in any online space.

3.3   When using social media, members of staff are expected to uphold University values, respect other employees, students and stakeholders, and protect confidentiality, privacy and security.

3.4   In an academic context it is inevitable that there will be debate. Members of staff should feel free to comment on their area of expertise but ensure that they are not disclosing any confidential information regarding the University and maintain standards required in Data Protection legislation in discussing other people. When disagreeing with others' opinions, however heated the debate, be polite. What individuals say and how they engage with a debate reflects on individuals as a professional and on the University.

3.5   Members of staff should not refer to other named members of staff, students, contractors or clients unless they have their express permission. Neither should members of staff create "personas" attached to staff, students, contractors or clients where this will lead to the identification of the person they refer to. To do so may lead to complaints against individuals relating to a breach of Data Protection and/or harassment.

3.6   All statements members of staff make must be true and not misleading. If members of staff speak about other education providers make sure what is said is factually correct and that it does not disparage them. Avoid unnecessary or unproductive arguments. If an error is made, this should be acknowledged and corrected. If members of staff modify content that was previously posted, for example editing a blog, make it clear this has been done.

3.7   All use of social media must comply with relevant University policies, including the Dignity at Work Procedure, Data Protection Policy and other IT related policies. This list is not exhaustive.

3.8   In line with usual standards about disclosure of information members of staff must not publish or report on conversations that are meant to be private or internal to the University unless they seek prior permission. Members of staff must not publish or report on any items of communication of the University, unless this is already in the public domain, without seeking permission. Members of staff must not post any photographs of people unless they have their permission (any photographs of children and young people under the age of 16 should have parental permission).

3.9   Members of staff should think about their own privacy, check any site's privacy statement and set privacy settings appropriately. Social network pages, blogs etc. are public. Do not put information on them that you do not want others to see. Once information has been posted it can be very difficult to remove. Even if individuals unsubscribe from a site the information may continue to remain visible for a long time.

3.10   Members of staff should not comment on anything related to legal matters, litigation, or any parties the University may be in dispute with.

3.11   Members of staff's conduct outside of work will affect their employment if their conduct could be said to bring the University into disrepute or where their conduct outside of work compromises their ability to carry out their role effectively.

3.12   Members of staff are reminded that other 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.

3.13   Nothing in the above guidance should be interpreted as a restriction on an individual's right to pursue action under the Public Interest Disclosure Act, commonly referred to as "whistleblowing". It should also be noted that disclosures on social networking sites are covered within the Act and therefore members of staff should ensure they have legal immunity prior to a post or other communication.

3.14   If members of staff are in any doubt about what they want to publish, they should seek further guidance from their manager or the Media Relations Office.

3.15   If members of staff have any concerns regarding their use of social media and how this affects their employment they should contact Human Resources.

4   Recruitment of Staff

4.1   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.

5   Intellectual property

5.1   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](#).

5.2   Staff are free to share University or third-party content, if they have permission or it has been made generally available without restriction.

5.3   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.

6   Data Protection Legislation and Freedom of Information

6.1   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](#).

6.2   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.

6.3   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.

7   Monitoring

7.1   At the University, there is no routine monitoring of electronic communications although all University web activity is logged, and access to sites which are likely to cause a breach of the Computing Regulations may be blocked. However, the University reserves the right to sanction investigation and inspection of electronic communications, where there is a complaint of an infringement of the regulations or the rules of the University.

8   Reporting issues

8.1   Where members of staff are in receipt, or become aware, of offensive or unacceptable content on or through social media, this should be reported to their line manager in the first instance. Advice may also be sought from Human Resources.

POLICY SIGN-OFF AND OWNERSHIP DETAILS

Document name:	Staff Use of Social Media Policy
Version Number:	V2
Equality Impact Assessment:	Completed
Approved by:	Head of HR
Date Approved:	February 2025
Next Review due by:	February 2028
Author:	HR Business Partner
Owner (if different from above):	Director of Human Resources
Document Location:	https://www.hud.ac.uk/media/policydocuments/Staff-Use-Of-Social-Media.pdf
Compliance Checks:	HRG regularly review to ensure compliance
Related Policies/Procedures:	Dignity at Work Procedure Data Protection Policy

REVISION HISTORY

Version	Date	Revision description/Summary of changes	Author
V1.1	October 2016	Formatting updates (minor amends not requiring committee approval)	HR Manager
V1.2	November 2019	Formatting updates (minor amends not requiring committee approval) and transference to new template	HR Manager
V1.3	April 2021	Formatting updates (minor amends not requiring committee approval) and transference to new template	HR Manager
V1.4	December 2021	Formatting updates (minor amends not requiring committee approval)	HR Manager
V2	February 2025	Minor amends including formatting	HR Business Partner