Policy on employee use and misuse of social media

July 2018

UNIVERSITY OF
WINCHESTER

Document Title:	*Policy on employee use and misuse of social media*
Document Author:	Sam Jones
Responsible Person and Department:	Sam Jones Communications and Marketing Department
Approving Body:	Vice-Chancellor
Date of Approval:	July 2018
Date Effective From:	*20 July 2018*
Review Date:	
Indicate whether the document is for public access or internal access only Indicate whether the document applies to collaborative provision? *(Strikethrough text, as appropriate)*	**Public Access** ~~Internal Access Only~~ ~~Applies to Collaborative Provision~~
Summary: Policy on employee use and misuse of social media at the University of Winchester.	

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. About this policy

1.1. The University of Winchester ('the University') is committed to delivering a creative, engaging and strategic approach to communications. To do this as efficiently and effectively as possible, the University must make the best use of technology to open up new ways for us to communicate better, both as an organisation and as individuals.

1.2. The University aims to use social media to engage with students, employees, alumni, stakeholders and the public to share news and provide opinion where appropriate.

1.3. The aim of this policy is to encourage positive engagement with social media and good practice in the responsible use of it. While acknowledging the right of employees to freedom of expression, the University has an obligation to protect the wellbeing and reputation of individual employees, students as well as the reputation of the institution as a whole.

1.4. This policy exists to minimise the risks to employees and students at the University through the inappropriate use of social media, to ensure that these channels are not being used to harass or harm others and to avoid any unjustified reputational, legal or ethical issues arising from the misuse of social media.

1.5. This policy should always be read alongside the 'Social Media: Guidance for employees' document. This guidance outlines important information and examples of when an employee or student might be considered to misuse social media.

2. Scope of this policy

2.1. This policy deals with the use of all forms of social media. 'Social media' is the term commonly used to refer to the channels used to interact with other people online. It allows the University to connect with others; build new communities; and share news, ideas and opinions in the form of text, images or videos. Whilst not exhaustive, social media platforms covered by this policy include Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, Google+, Wikipedia, Instagram, SnapChat, WhatsApp, YouTube and all other social networking sites, internet postings and blogs.

2.2. This policy applies to all employees at the University and to all public and/or professional communications within any social media platform, regardless of location, including away from campus and on personal devices, whether to an individual directly, to a limited group or a public post, but only to the extent that they constitute unlawful behaviour, misuse or a breach of this policy.

2.3. Employees should be aware that NO social media use is ever guaranteed to be completely private whatever their privacy settings. Similarly, an individual's status as an employee of the University may be discernible even if not openly disclosed by that employee: social media posts are almost always capable of being forwarded, reposted and commented upon. Therefore this policy applies to private communications but only where they break the law or constitute a breach of your employment contract or other university policies.

2.4. The University is committed to upholding the rights of our employees to Freedom of Expression (EHRC/HRA: Article 10) and academic freedom of speech, provided it is within the law and compliant with contractual agreements and University

policies. This includes raising valid and truthful issues regarding the University via social media.

2.5. This policy may need to be amended to reflect the changing nature of social media and its use. Any changes will be agreed through the Planning and Resources Committee.

2.6. This policy should be read alongside the 'Social Media: Guidance for employees' document and other University policies, including:

a) Policy for student use of social media

b) ICT Acceptable Use Policy

c) Dignity at work

d) Data protection policy

e) Relationships Policy and Procedure

f) Equality and Diversity Policy

g) Bullying and Harassment Policy

h) Disciplinary Procedure Policy

i) Gender Identity and Reassignment Policy

3. University criteria for creating and using University social media channels

3.1. The University maintains corporate accounts across most major social media channels managed by the Communications and Marketing Department. These corporate accounts have large followings and are a useful way for the University to communicate with the various groups we serve.

3.2. Other areas within the University may wish to create social media profiles, for example an Academic Department or Professional Service. Before creating a new account or when taking over responsibility for one, employees should first meet with the Communications and Marketing Department to discuss best practice for setting up and managing these accounts. Details of the account, including login details, should be maintained centrally by the Communications and Marketing Department. Please see the separate guidance about this.

4. Use of social media to communicate with current or prospective students

4.1. Employees are not required to use social media to communicate with students. If an employee does wish to use social media to communicate with current or prospective students, this should be done via official University accounts rather than their personal accounts (see 3.2 above about creating these accounts). These social media accounts should make it clear that the user is an employee and that all official communication will be conducted through Canvas, University email and the University Intranet.

4.2. If an employee intends to use social media to communicate with students, they need to register this with their Dean and the Communications and Marketing

Department together with evidence that Canvas training has been completed and Canvas is being used for course communication.

4.3. Care should be taken not to communicate in a way that implies a social or personal relationship rather than a professional one. There is a real problem if others in the cohort feeling excluded and, arising from that, perceptions of unfairness and accusations of bias.

4.4. Please refer to the University's Relationship Policy for further details about employee to student relationships.

4.5. If employees wish to use social media in addition to Canvas to communicate with students then they should do so with entire cohorts, not selectively. This should be done via an account or page set up for the relevant area, with the support of the Communications and Marketing Department, not via an employee's personal social media account. If an entire cohort cannot be communicated with in this manner then an alternative should be sought.

5. Use of social media to communicate course information with current students

5.1. Students are not required to be a user of any social media platforms nor to use social media for any aspect of being a student at the University, their studies nor their interactions with University employees.

5.2. Canvas must be used to communicate course information to students. Social media may only be used to impart course information in addition to the formal channels of Canvas, University email and the University Intranet. Once a message or details have been posted on Canvas it can be shared using social media via University accounts. Personal social media accounts should not be used.

5.3. Any direct communication between employees and students should be directed through Canvas or University email and not through social media.

5.4. Canvas must be used to promote activity related to a course, for example an event or interesting article. Once it has been shared on Canvas it can be shared on social media.

6. Expected standards of behaviour

6.1. Employees 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 (see section 2.6).

6.2. Employees must not express opinions on the University's behalf via social media, unless expressly authorised to do so by the Director of Communications and Marketing or an identified representative. Employees may be required to undergo training in order to obtain such authorisation.

6.3. Employees must not post comments about sensitive University-related topics or do anything to jeopardise the University's commercially sensitive or confidential information and intellectual property. Employees must not include our logos in any social media posting or in their profile on any social media unless agreed with the Director of Communications and Marketing or an identified representative.

6.4. Employees are not permitted to divulge University confidential and commercially sensitive information on social media, whether during or after employment with the University

6.5. Employees will be considered responsible for any posts they make on Social Media, including the expression of opinions. Prior approval will be required from the Director of Communications and Marketing for any views attributed to the University.

6.6. Employees must not use social media in a way or post anything that:

   a) Could be considered to harass, bully or unlawfully discriminate against employees, students or third parties (see the 'Social Media: Guidance for employees' document for examples of behaviours)

   b) Is threatening, harassing, discriminatory, illegal, obscene, indecent, defamatory, or hostile towards any individual or entity

   c) Discriminates on the grounds of race, sex and gender identity, pregnancy, disability, sexual orientation, age, marital status, political or religious belief or contravenes the University's Equality and Diversity Policy

   d) Engages in any activity that constitutes a criminal offence

   e) Makes false or misleading statements

   f) Impersonates University employees, students or third parties or uses fake accounts or another person's name without their consent

   g) Breaches copyright

   h) Divulges University confidential or commercially sensitive information or reveals personal information about a University employee, student, client or customer (data, contact details or photographs) without their permission on social media, whether during or after your time as an employee.

   i) Expresses opinions on the University's behalf via social media, unless expressly authorised to do so by the Director of Communications and Marketing or an identified representative (you may be required to undergo training in order to obtain such authorisation).

6.7. The University takes complaints and concerns from students and employees very seriously. There are formal and appropriate ways for complaints to be raised via the Complaints Procedure as set out in the University Complaints Policy. It is unacceptable for employees to post details of complaints, disciplinary proceedings and/or legal proceedings/potential legal proceedings involving the University. Doing so may result in further investigation or disciplinary action.

6.8. Any employee who is experiencing cyber bullying by another employee, a student or, in the course of their employment, by a member of the public, will have the full support of the University. Employees should refer to the University's Dignity at Work policy which outlines the procedure to be followed if an employee feels they are being bullied, harassed or victimised.

7. Breach of this policy

7.1. If an employee has concerns about how they, colleagues or students are being treated online they should speak to their line-manager, Human Resources, the University Ombudsman or the Director of Communications and Marketing.

7.2. If an employee sees social media content that breaches this policy they should contact the Director of Communications and Marketing or the Director of Human Resources.

7.3. This policy will be invoked when the University is made aware of inappropriate use of social media or if these channels are being used to harass or harm others.

7.4. Breach of this policy may result in disciplinary action up to and including dismissal. Any disciplinary action will be taken in accordance with the Disciplinary Procedure Policy.

7.5. Disciplinary action may be taken 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.

7.6. Any employee suspected of committing a breach of this policy will be expected to co-operate with our investigation. In cases where criminal conduct is suspected or reported, the matter may be referred by the University to the police. Beyond that, any employee, student or third party may pursue legal action against that employee, if they choose to do so.

7.7. The University reserves the right to ensure the rules relating to employee activities using its IT resources are being complied with and such activities are for legitimate purposes.

7.8. Employees may be required to remove any social media content that the University considers to constitute a breach of this policy. Failure to comply with such a request may in itself result in disciplinary action.