Colleague Social Media Policy

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Policy Snapshot

- The University respects lawful freedom of expression and the principle of Academic Freedom and at the same time seeks to ensure the rights of all members of our community not to be subjected to any form of threatening, abusive, defamatory, or discriminatory behaviour and to protect the University's confidentiality and reputation.

- Colleagues who contribute to social media sites should do so responsibly and should behave online as they would do in-person.

- Colleagues should be aware of the risks of posting on social media and should understand the key differences between using University of Glasgow and/or personal/private accounts, understanding in particular the risks of posting online content which breaches any of the relevant University policies, including the Dignity at Work and Study Policy or posting content which is threatening, abusive, discriminatory or defamatory and/or brings the University into disrepute.

- The University reserves the right to moderate its own social media and communication channels and may remove content at its own discretion.

- The University respects an individual's right to a private life and does not, and will not, monitor personal individual social media accounts.

1. Introduction

1.1 Social media provides important opportunities, connections and reach for the University and our community is encouraged to engage, collaborate and innovate on social networks. However, as an instantaneous and far-reaching form of communication, there are also a number of risks associated with the use of social media platforms, which could have a negative impact on colleagues and/or the University itself.

1.2 This policy sets out the University's minimum expectations and provides guidance to colleagues with regard to the use of social media, which should be considered alongside the contents of our Social Media Guidance webpages, on how to safely use social media to maximise the benefits offered while minimising the associated risks for both individual users and the University.

1.3 The University will not tolerate any form of bullying or harassment (online or otherwise) and any colleagues affected by or looking to report such behaviour,

or any other related misuse of social media, should see <u>Section 8 – Support for Colleagues</u> below.

2.   Definition of Social Media

2.1   For the purposes of this policy, 'social media' is defined as forms of communication through which users create or participate in online communities to share information, ideas, personal messages, news, opinions, knowledge, interests and to celebrate success. Use of them includes posting, commenting, instant messaging and sharing links, images and files.

2.2   Examples of such social media include, but are not limited to:

- Instagram
- Twitter
- Snapchat
- Facebook
- YouTube
- WhatsApp
- LinkedIn
- Pinterest
- Reddit

- Vimeo
- Blogs
- Flickr
- Online chat forums (e.g. Yammer)
- Weibo
- WeChat
- TikTok

2.3   The University recognises that social media has a broad definition and there are significant variations between different platforms, with some platforms being designed to enable immediate engagement with large networks whilst others may more typically be used as a form of instant messaging (often to smaller groups).

2.4   Platforms such as Yammer can also be further defined as 'Enterprise/Workplace Social Media', and by their very nature enable the University to moderate or remove content as it deems necessary.

3.   Scope

3.1   This policy applies to all colleagues and representatives of the University of Glasgow, including casual workers, contractors and visiting colleagues.

3.2   It covers colleagues engaging with social media both in a professional work capacity or in a personal capacity (in or out of normal working hours) when that engagement may be connected to the University. The University recognises that there is a significant difference in the dynamic between official workplace and personal use of social media. This policy is intended to build awareness and enhance the transparency of potential workplace implications that can arise

from certain forms of social media posts (through which individuals may be associated with the University, deliberately or otherwise) and to minimise allegations of misuse.

The University is not in the business of monitoring personal individual social media accounts.

Specific considerations for official work use and personal use are covered under Section 6 – Responsibilities.

4. Principles

4.1   The principles below are overarching principles that colleagues should be aware of, in conjunction with other relevant policies and codes such as the University's:

- Dignity At Work and Study Policy
- Code of Professional Conduct
- Code of Practice on Unacceptable Behaviour
- IT Services Code of Conduct
- Data Protection Policy & Related Guidance
- Research Ethics
- Disciplinary Procedure

4.2   The principles and expectations outlined in the policies and codes of practice outlined above equally apply to colleague behaviour in both physical and virtual environments.

4.3   The University respects freedom of expression and, at the same time, seeks to ensure that confidentiality and the University's reputation are protected, along with the rights of all members of our community not to be subjected to any form of threatening, abusive, defamatory or discriminatory behaviour (or any other behaviour that contravenes any of the relevant University policies including our Dignity at Work and Study Policy).

4.4   With reference to any potential risk of bringing the University into disrepute, this policy is not intended to suppress reasonable or legitimate challenge to the University's performance against its own standards and values. It is expected that actionable instances of bringing the University into disrepute will typically involve significant or sustained acts that have an acute and notable impact (or potentially acute and notable impact) on the University's reputation, without justifiable cause.

4.5   The University also upholds the principles outlined in its Public Interest Disclosure (Whistleblowing) Policy.

4.6   All members of our community are entitled to freedom from threats and abuse – in all forms of communication with one another - including on social media.

4.7   Other than where it is a specific requirement of their employment, colleagues are not obliged to participate in social media if they do not wish to do so. Staff communication with students should be through University provided channels. Use of certain forms of social media (e.g. direct messaging apps) may be appropriate in some legitimate work-related circumstances using University devices (e.g. where it plays an essential role in communicating in the absence of alternatives), however, colleagues are advised to seek direction from relevant colleagues (e.g. their line manager) in advance. In any case, colleagues should avoid contact of a personal nature with students using personal social media/phone numbers, direct messaging apps, or other private channels.

4.8   Where unsolicited and/or persistent and unwanted contact is received by colleagues via social media, colleagues may seek further support and guidance from their manager or alternatively may contact their local People & OD Team (and are encouraged to do so prior to engaging or responding). Further support is available (if required) as outlined in 'Section 8 – Support' below.

4.9   The University reserves the right to moderate its own social media and communication channels and may remove content at its own discretion.

4.10   External social media posts can be brought to the attention of the University if any official University accounts are tagged or mentioned in published content.

5.   Academic Freedom

5.1   The University respects lawful freedom of expression and the principle on Academic Freedom sets out that in their areas of academic discipline, colleagues engaged in teaching or the provision of learning or research will have freedom within the law to do any of the following without placing in jeopardy their employment at the University or any entitlements or privileges that they enjoy:

  o hold and express opinions
  o question and test established ideas or received wisdom
  o develop and advance new ideas or innovative proposals
  o present controversial or unpopular points of view

5.2   Higher Education Institutions must uphold, so far as is considered reasonable, the academic freedom of all relevant persons, and in line with this the University would expect the above principles to apply within individual areas of academic discipline.

6.   Responsibilities

6.1   This section outlines general responsibilities when using social media as well as some responsibilities specific to the use of official or personal accounts, recognising that the purpose and use of these accounts is usually distinctly different.

General Responsibilities

6.2   Don't post comments or content that could be considered threatening, abusive, discriminatory, or defamatory (or which breaches any relevant University policy, including those outlined at 4.1). Appendix B of the Dignity at Work and Study Policy in particular gives a list of examples of bullying and harassment.

6.3   Consider the potential risk of any published content bringing the University into disrepute.

6.4   Value diversity and recognise that different people bring different perspectives, ideas, knowledge and culture. In doing so, respect the rights of individuals to hold different beliefs and views and to express them through appropriate contribution to discussion and academic debate. It is this global outlook that makes our community world-leading and world-changing.

6.5   Respect the right of others to challenge points of view, provided that challenge is based on accurate evidence, facts or reasonable argument and that it is thoughtful and made in an appropriate way.

6.6   Be aware that some opinions and arguments may cause offence to some people but that this is not, of itself, a sufficient reason not to express those opinions and arguments. Additionally, be aware that some opinions or arguments presented by others may also cause offence in return and that likewise this is unlikely to be a sufficient reason for others not to express them. Colleagues may find it helpful to refer to the policies and codes outlined at 4.1 above as a reference source regarding expected standards of behaviour.

6.7   Use other more appropriate channels as an alternative to social media to raise issues where an individual has a complaint with an area of the University (e.g. raising with a line manager or considering the Grievance Procedure). This provides the University with the opportunity to understand the complaint and to seek to resolve the matter via those more appropriate channels and reduces the opportunity for amplification of misunderstandings or misrepresentation/misinterpretation of factual information.

6.8   Unless covered by the University's Public Interest Disclosure (Whistleblowing) Policy don't publish, share or discuss confidential information relating to the University or any associated individual or organisation, on social media. No

information is to be made available that could provide a person with unauthorised access to the University, confidential or sensitive information (e.g. unpublished and sensitive research findings) or intellectual property. Any non-disclosure agreements that are in place must not be violated.

[Responsibilities using social media in an official capacity]

6.9 Detailed guidance on how to get started with an official University Social Media account, best practice and associated guidelines can be found on the [Social Media Guidance pages.]

6.10 Posts made from University Social Media accounts directly represent the University therefore it is vital that posts are considered carefully to ensure that they comply with the principles and responsibilities outlined in this policy and do not bring the University into disrepute or cause harm to others.

6.11 There is a greater risk of bringing the University into disrepute when publishing content on official University channels and consideration should be given to appropriate safeguards to minimise communication errors (e.g. a process of checking/approving posts).

6.12 The University discourages colleagues from posting anonymously or using pseudonyms whilst using official University channels or accounts.

6.13 Care should be taken to distinguish between personal views and those of the University or any other person, group of people or organisation with which the University may be associated.

6.14 Colleagues should familiarise themselves with the University's [data protection policies and procedures] and adhere to these policies and codes of conduct with regards to the use of particular platforms and be aware that, for example, posting certain types of comments on a public site may be incompatible with the policies of any particular platform.

6.15 Colleagues should ensure copyright laws are not breached by avoiding use of images or content (including music) without express permission and by giving due credit where permission has been granted.

6.16 If colleagues are in doubt, support can be sought from the University's Social and Digital Media Team.

[Responsibilities using social media in a personal capacity]

6.17 The University respects an individual's right to a private life and does not and will not monitor personal individual social media accounts.

6.18 It is important, however, that colleagues remember that content posted on social media is instantaneous and can be far-reaching, often beyond the

boundaries of 'private' networks (e.g. other individuals can directly share, or possibly screenshot then share posted content). This can have the effect of content reaching a wider audience than originally intended, outwith the originators control.

6.19 Colleagues should familiarise themselves with the relevant privacy settings for any platforms utilised and decide on an appropriate level of privacy for their use but noting that these settings do not guarantee content will not reach a wider audience.

6.20 Colleagues should be mindful that content on their personal social media accounts may identify them as an employee of the University (intentional or otherwise). Where colleagues elect to discuss their work on personal social media accounts consideration should be given to ensuring it is clear that the views expressed are their own and do not necessarily reflect those of the University and, having considered para 6.8 above.

6.21 Colleagues should be aware that even without direct promotion of their links to the University (e.g. obvious statements), they may still be identifiable or known as University employees (e.g. through connections).

6.22 Whilst the University will never monitor individual accounts, colleagues should be aware that other individuals can raise concerns about content posted and if brought to the attention of the University this may be subject to investigation to establish if the content is in breach of University Policy.

7. Misuse of Social Media

7.1 When the University is made aware that content posted on social media is potentially contrary to the principles outlined in this policy (or any other relevant University policy), the University will investigate appropriately and may request the removal of content.

7.2 Colleagues who post threatening, abusive, discriminatory or defamatory content online and/or bring the University into disrepute (or post online content which breaches any of the relevant University policies, including the Dignity at Work and Study Policy), may face disciplinary action in line with the University's Disciplinary Procedure following appropriate investigation. Any investigation or associated process would be managed in strict confidence and any materials gathered or relied upon during a disciplinary process (e.g. screenshots) would be stored and processed in line with the P&OD Records Retention Schedule.

7.3 Where any of the above relates to a contractor engaged by the University, further action will be considered by the relevant University managers in consultation with the Procurement Team. Where any of the above relates to a

visiting colleague, further advice should be sought from the relevant People & Organisational Development Team.

8.   Support for Colleagues

8.1   Whilst this policy sets out the expected standards of conduct on social media, the University recognises that members of its community may encounter or be subjected to threatening, abusive, defamatory or discriminatory behaviour (or any other behaviour that contravenes our Dignity at Work and Study Policy or other related policies – please see 4.1). Colleagues may also be exposed to specific forms of online/cyber harassment such as doxxing or brigading.

8.2   Colleagues who are affected by content or abuse online can raise any concerns with the relevant manager if they feel able to do so or alternatively may contact their local People & OD Team or find further routes to support (including the facility to report bullying, harassment or sexual misconduct) via the University's Dignity at Work and Study webpages.

8.3   Students can also complain about inappropriate use of social media by staff via the University's Complaints Procedure or similarly may report bullying, discrimination or harassment via the online reporting tool.

9.   Additional Social Media Resources

9.1   Colleagues can also refer to the Social Media Guidance webpages, which include support on how to mitigate risks, manage mistakes and information on how to contact the University's Communications and Social Media teams about issues arising from the use of social media.

9.2   General support can be sought from the University's Social and Digital Media Team and managers may seek support from their local People & Organisational Development Team (e.g. where there are concerns around online conduct).

10.   Links / Resources

Social Media Guidance webpages

Dignity at Work & Study Procedure

Code of Professional Conduct

IT Services Code of Conduct – Regulations for the use of University ICT systems and facilities

Glasgow Professional Behavioural Framework

Research Ethics

Disciplinary Policy & Procedure

Grievance Policy & Procedure

11. Document Control

Document Control	
Policy name	Colleague Social Media Policy
Approved by	SMG (May 2023)
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Owner	External Relations/People & OD
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