

Guidance on the Use of Social Media

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1 Introduction

The University of Strathclyde recognises the opportunity social media provides in effectively communicating with our students, our staff and our partners in business and other organisations on a local, national and international scale.

It is recognised that, as well as providing effective tools for communication, there are potential risks associated with the use of social media. This guidance document details how we can promote good practice in relation to social media use amongst University staff, highlights some of the issues that need to be considered in using social media and confirms the University's expectations of staff in their usage of social media as it relates to their employment with the University.

Social media is the generic term given to describe web based communication platforms which enable users to instantly connect and interact with others in a variety of different formats. A social media site allows user-generated content to develop through interactions and collaborations in a virtual community, and may encompass text, graphic, audio and video formats.

Examples of social media that staff will be familiar with include:

- Facebook
- LinkedIn
- Google+
- Twitter
- YouTube
- Flickr
- Instagram
- Discussion boards
- Blogs, etc.

It is recognised however that the number of social media channels is continually changing and this guidance covers any online communications published outwith the University website.

The University encourages employees to make use of social media where appropriate for their work. It is recognised that social media can enhance the work of the University if used in a reasonable and appropriate way.

Some of the common uses of social media by University staff include:

- Teaching and Learning support - social media offers the potential to support and advance learning opportunities.
- Collaboration - social media can assist with both internal and external collaboration and create new ways for stakeholders to communicate and work together.
- External relations and public relations - social media can assist the University to communicate with prospective and existing students, staff and industry.
- Recruitment - social media can assist in boosting the University's student and staff recruitment activities e.g. through publication of opportunities via existing networks.
- Alumni relations - social media can assist in maintaining contact and developing relationships with graduates.

2 General Guidelines

2.1 Social Media Use for Work Purposes

- It is recognised that social media can be a tool to encourage student engagement and learning. It is also recognised that University staff are individuals with the right to a private life. Social media brings a new dimension to the staff-student relationship and can be far more informal in nature. You should be aware of this when interacting with students via social media, particularly when considering becoming “friends” with students on social media. You should never share information with students or interact with their comments or opinions in any environment that you would not willingly or appropriately share in a University or other public setting.
- You should be aware that you are representing the University when using social media for work purposes. As a result, any communication via social media should be for a purpose, be accurate and respectful in tone and have a benefit to the University.
- You should take reasonable care when expressing views and opinions on a social media site if they are related to work, regardless of whether the University is referred to or not.
- You should take care when using social media not breach the principles of the University’s Dignity and Respect policy and Equality and Diversity Policy. Ensure that content could not be considered derogatory, offensive, sexually explicit, defamatory, harassing or bullying towards others or discriminatory on the grounds of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership status, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation or any other irrelevant factor.
- You should not breach confidentiality by, for example, revealing information owned by the University (including intellectual property) or giving away confidential information about University business, colleagues, students or partner organisations.
- You should not communicate in such a way via social media as to bring the University into disrepute e.g. personally criticising or arguing with students, colleagues or external partners of the University or posting inappropriate images or links to inappropriate content.
- You should ensure that at no time you are breaching copyright through using images or content without permission or without appropriately citing the source.
- You should get permission from the individuals concerned before posting personal information and/or images pertaining to colleagues, students, partners of the University or any other known third party affiliated to the University.
- You should report any incidents, potential conflicts of interest or signs of damaging social media use to your line manager as soon as possible so that the appropriate action can be taken in accordance with the relevant University policy.
- Many social media sites permit the creation of multiple accounts and you may wish to consider whether using this facility would assist in delineating your work use of social media from your personal use.
- If a social media account is used by multiple members of staff (e.g. a generic Twitter feed) care should be taken in the management of the access to this account, particularly when staff change roles or leave University employment.

2.2 Social Media in Personal Life

It is recognised that many employees will choose to make use of social media in their personal life. Although they are not representing the University in this context it must be understood that conduct in use of social media is relevant where the individual is recognised as being a University employee. In the context of personal use of social media the following guidelines should be followed:

- Ensure that the use of social media for non-work related activities in the workplace or using University equipment is at a reasonable level and is not undertaken during paid working time.
- Take the necessary precautions when utilising social media sites to ensure your own personal safety and to protect against identity fraud.
- You should get permission from the individuals concerned before posting personal information and/or images in relation to colleagues, students, partners of the University or any other third party affiliated to the University.
- You should take care in using social media not breach the principles of the University's Dignity and Respect Policy and Equality and Diversity Policy. Ensure that content could not be considered derogatory, offensive, sexually explicit, defamatory, harassing or bullying towards others or discriminatory on the grounds of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership status, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation or any other irrelevant factor.
- If you discuss work in private use of social media (e.g. giving opinions on your area of expertise or higher education generally) you should advise that views and opinions expressed belong to you and do not necessarily reflect the views of the University, by stating "The views expressed on this website/blog/networking site are mine alone and do not necessarily reflect the views of my employer".
- You should report any incidents, potential conflicts of interest or signs of damaging social media use to your line manager as soon as possible so that the appropriate action can be taken in accordance with the relevant University policy.
- Report to your line manager and the Media and Corporate Communications team if any members of the media or press contact you about posts on your site which relate to the University.

2.3 Other University Uses of Social Media

- The University will utilise social media for the purposes of attracting candidates (e.g. posting vacancy details via social networks) or for finding candidates where individuals have posted details on social media sites for the purpose of attracting prospective employers.
- The University will not normally refer to social media sites when assessing job applications unless such sites are specifically highlighted in the application made by an individual candidate as providing evidence for suitability in the role. There should be no systematic checking of prospective employees online social media activities, as conducting these searches during the selection process may lead to a presumption that an applicant's protected characteristic played a part in a recruitment decision.

Inappropriate use of social media, whether at work or in a private capacity, can potentially violate the privacy, breach the security and/or harm the reputations of colleagues, students and/or the University. Breaches of these guidelines such as bullying of colleagues or social media activity which causes reputational damage to the University may constitute misconduct and could result in disciplinary action being taken.

If a third party not associated with the University complains of inappropriate social media activity against a University employee, the University will investigate the matter under the University's complaints policy.

3 University Policies and Guidance

University policy and guidance documents that are relevant to this guidance include:

- [University Policy on the Use of Computing Facilities and Resources](#)
- [Dignity and Respect Policy](#)
- [Equality and Diversity Policy](#)
- [Staff Disciplinary Procedure](#)
- [Complaints Procedure](#)
- [Staff Grievance Procedure](#)
- [Data Protection](#)
- [Freedom of Information](#)