

Social Media Policy for Students

1.0 INTRODUCTION

At Keele, we recognise that internet social media channels provide you with unique opportunities to participate in discussions and share information on topics of interest, and to enrich your learning and studies through social media activity and engagement. Social media is also a valuable means for you to stay in touch with friends and family and enhance your personal life and career opportunities.

1.1 Purpose

This policy contains requirements for compliance in addition to any professional guidelines, for students studying on [professional programmes](#). The policy is intended to support you in making the best use of social media sites without compromising your personal security, current/future career opportunities; (particularly if you are studying for a professionally accredited programme or award, and/or the reputation of the University).

The objectives of this policy are to:

- provide you with information on the expected standards of behaviour on social media and highlight the potential risks it may pose for you;
- define the responsibilities of using social media for University purposes;
- highlight potential risks of using social media for personal use and in a professional capacity;
- raise awareness of relevant UK legislation, regulations and University policies (see 5.1);
- minimise the potential negative reputational impact for you and the University as a result of your use of social media.

1.2 Scope

This policy covers all aspects of social media/social networking, in any capacity, including but not limited to services such as Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Instagram, YouTube, Snapchat, wikis, profile blogs and other electronic communication apps.

The policy is designed to ensure that you:

- fully appreciate the possible reputational, legal and ethical implications of engaging in social media and other online communication;
- understand that there is the potential for you to misuse it, whether intentionally or otherwise, and that this may have serious implications.

1.3 Your Responsibilities

The University's [IT Conditions of Use \(IT Regulations\)](#) outline the standard of behaviour expected when you are communicating online and on social networking platforms (see section 8 of the IT Regulations). This also regulates the use of staff user accounts and temporary accounts for University purposes.

As a student, you are responsible for:

1. ensuring that any use of social media is carried out in line with these conditions and with other relevant laws and University policies listed in section 5 below;
2. complying with the conditions when using Keele IT online services arranged by or for the University;
3. communicating responsibly online and appropriately monitoring, updating and managing the content you have posted;

2.0 EXPECTED STANDARDS OF BEHAVIOUR

If you use social media, you are responsible for how you use it to communicate. You should be aware that posts on social media may not stay private (even on closed profiles or groups), as it can be difficult to control how widely any material posted is shared or copied.

The standards of behaviour expected in the physical world also apply online and on social media/networking channels. Online behaviour should never violate University regulations, policies or obligations you have as a student. Your use of social media must not infringe on the rights or privacy of the University, other students, staff or members of the University.

The following non-exhaustive list may be considered unacceptable online behaviour:

- Sharing confidential information (which may include research not yet in the public domain, information about fellow students or staff or personnel matters, non-public or not yet approved documents or information);
- hate speech of any kind (see 2.1 below);
- details of complaints, disciplinary hearings or proceedings with the University;
- using accounts in another person's name without their consent;
- comments or material, including images, that constitutes bullying or is threatening, harassing, discriminatory, illegal, obscene, indecent, defamatory or hostile towards any individual or entity;
- any posting that constitutes a criminal offence;
- anything which compromises the safety of students or staff of the University.

2.1 Cyber Bullying & Hate Crime

The University is committed to providing a safe and welcoming environment within which all staff and students can flourish and achieve their potential, and which is free from bullying and harassment. Cyberbullying is bullying that takes place online and can occur through text, apps, social media forums and can include sending, posting, or sharing negative, harmful, false content about someone else. It can include sharing personal or private information about someone else causing embarrassment or humiliation. A [hate crime](#) is defined as a criminal offence committed against a person or their property. For further information see the [weblink](#). Harassment is unwanted behaviour which you find offensive or which makes you feel intimidated or humiliated. It can happen on its own or alongside other forms of discrimination. The unwanted behaviour could be:

- spoken or written words or abuse, maliciously spreading rumours or lies
- offensive emails, tweets or comments on social networking sites such as intimidating or aggressive behaviour, images and graffiti
- physical gestures, offensive or threatening comments or content posting comments/photos etc
- facial expressions, jokes or deliberately mocking an individual with the intent to harass or humiliate.

As a student you are required to:

- conduct yourself in a manner which demonstrates respect for University staff, students and members of the University;
- act in line with Regulation B1 [Student Discipline](#) - Section 5, which governs expectations of student conduct;
- ensure that you comply with any professionalism and confidentiality codes of conduct for your particular study discipline or research area. For example, Health Sciences, Social Work, Education, Medical and Veterinary students must retain professionalism and respect confidentiality;

3.0 SUPPORT AVAILABLE

If you feel you have been affected by the online behaviour of others, please contact [Student Services](#) who are able to offer support. We also have a dedicated [helpline](#) for anyone affected by hate incidents or hate crime which includes victims of hate crime, witnesses to incidents that could be hate crimes or anyone who is a third party to an incident that could be a hate crime.

4.0 CONSEQUENCES OF A BREACH OF THIS POLICY

Any breach of this policy may result in disciplinary action, or possible sanction under Regulation B5 Fitness to Practice if you study a professional programme. Any disciplinary action may include reference to the social media or digital publication which may be used in evidence. As part of this procedure, you may be requested to remove the post, failure to do so may lead to disciplinary action. See [Student Discipline Procedure under Regulation B1](#) and also [Fitness to Practice under Regulation B5](#) for students on professionally accredited programmes.

Where it is believed this policy has been breached, consideration of the law, University regulations and the context of the issue will be taken into account.

It should be noted that disciplinary action may be taken against a student regardless of the network or device used to access the online material.

5.0 RELATED LEGISLATION, POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

5.1 Legislation referenced:

- General Data Protection Regulations 2018 & Data Protection Act 2018
- Equality Act 2010
- Communications Act 2003
- The Anti-Terrorism, Crime and Security Act 2001 & Terrorism Act 2000
- Malicious Communications (NI) Order 1988 Electronic Communications Act 2000
- Freedom of Information Act 2000
- Protection from Harassment Act 1997
- Obscene Publications Act 1994
- Copyright (Computer Programs) Regulations 1992
- Computer Misuse Act 1990
- Human Rights Act 1998

5.2 Relevant University Policies and Procedures:

- [Appeals procedure](#)
- [Equality Diversity and Inclusion Strategy](#)
- [Freedom of Speech Code of Practice](#)

- [IT Conditions of Use \(IT Regulations\)](#)
- [Safeguarding Policy](#)
- [Student Agreement](#)
- [Student Complaints](#)
- [Student Discipline](#)

6.0 REVIEW, APPROVAL AND PUBLICATION

Monitoring of this policy will be undertaken by Student Services and will be reviewed every three years and will be reported through Senate Committee.

7.0 DOCUMENT CONTROL INFORMATION

Document Name	Social Media Policy for Students
Owner	Student Services
Version Number	0.1
Equality Analysis Decision and Date	
Approval Date	
Approved By	
Date of Commencement	
Date of Last Review	
Date for Next Review	
Related University policy Documents	
<i>For Office Use – Keywords for search function</i>	