The University of
Nottingham

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Social Media Policy for Staff

Executive Summary

The following policy aims to offer guidance and direction on staff use of social media while employed by the University of Nottingham. While social media can offer many social, academic and professional benefits, there is an inherent risk attached to its use, and this policy can make individual members of staff aware of the impact that misuse of social media can have on themselves, their fellow staff members, students and the University's reputation. It advocates the use of social media, but encourages a cautious and considered approach, while outlining the standards of conduct expected from employees at the University.

The policy covers:

1. Freedom of speech/academic freedom
2. Social media use in teaching and learning
3. Social media use and personal life
4. Expected standards of behaviour when using social media
5. Cyber bullying via social media
6. Intellectual property concerns on social media
7. Use of the University's brand
8. Responsibilities in regards to social media
9. Monitoring
10. Data protection
11. Guidance on breaches to the policy and potential consequences

This policy is also cross referenced with various other University policies and procedures including:

- The Data Protection Policy
- The Code of Practice for users of the University Computing Facilities
- The Electronic Mail Usage Policy
- The Code of Research Conduct and Research Ethics
- The Information Security Policy
- The Dignity at Nottingham Policy
- The Disciplinary Procedure for Staff
- The Grievance Procedure

University Codes of Practice and Rules

Social Media Policy for Staff

1.   **Policy statement**

1.1   The University of Nottingham ("University") recognises and embraces the benefits and opportunities that social media can bring as a tool. It can be used to share news, information and successes, keep staff and students up to date with important developments and promote healthy academic debate about controversial subjects and areas of research. There is, however, an inherent risk involved in using instantaneous and far reaching forms of communication and inappropriate use can impact upon staff, students and the reputation of the University. The University encourages you to engage, collaborate and innovate through social media; however, wherever and however you do this, you must be aware of the potential impact on both yourself and the University.

1.2   This policy provides information for members of staff as to the appropriate use of social media when acting on behalf of or referencing the University.

2.   **Scope of the policy**

2.1.   For the purpose of this policy, social media is defined as any online interactive tool which encourages participation, interaction and exchanges. New forms of social media appear on a fairly regular basis and currently include Facebook, Flickr, Instagram, YouTube, LinkedIn, WhatsApp and Twitter, as well as blogs, discussion forums, instant messaging and any website that allows public commenting or posting.

2.2.   This policy applies to all staff and to any professional or personal communications within a social media platform which directly or indirectly reference the University. There is a complementary social media policy that applies to students.

2.3.   This policy applies to social media communications made at any time, whether privately or publicly, including outside of office hours, and from anywhere, including away from campus and on personal devices, whether to an individual, to a limited group or to the world.

2.4.   The University acknowledges that some of its staff use social media as a form of professional communication, through official University websites and accounts and/or by using the University name and logo. For the avoidance of doubt, all professional communications are within the scope of this policy.

2.5.   Any personal use of social media should be kept to non-work time, such as lunch breaks.

2.6.   The University acknowledges that its staff may use social media in their private lives and for personal communications. Personal communications are those made on, or from, a private social media account, such as a personal page on Facebook or a personal blog. In all cases where a private social media account is used which identifies the University, it must be made clear that the account is private to avoid the impression that the views expressed on or through that social media account are made on behalf of the University.

3.   **Freedom of Speech and Academic Freedom**

3.1.   Nothing in this policy is intended to have the effect of limiting either freedom of speech or academic freedom, subject to that freedom being exercised within the law.

4.   **Using social media as a teaching and learning tool**

4.1.   Where staff intend to use social media as a teaching and learning tool, this should be done in the context and spirit of this policy ensuring the expected standards of behaviour are observed by staff and students at all times.

5. Social media in your personal life

5.1 As a member of staff you should be aware of your association with and responsibilities to the University, and ensure that your personal profiles and related content are consistent with:

- the University's policies, including but not limited to, data protection, dignity, electronic mail usage and information security
- your employment contract with the University
- how you would wish to present yourself

5.2 You must also be aware of the potential impact and permanence of anything which you post online. Therefore, you should avoid posting anything online that:

- you would not wish to be in the public domain
- you would not be willing to say personally to the face of another individual

5.3 You should also be aware that any digital material that you post online could reach a wider audience than you would have expected or intended. Once digital content has been created and shared, you will have limited control over its permanence and audience.

6. Expected standards of behaviour

6.1. Staff 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 6.3).

6.2. Communications on social media must be professional and/or respectful at all times and in accordance with this policy. Use of social media must not infringe on the rights or privacy of staff or students, and staff must not make ill-considered comments or judgments about other staff, students or third parties.

6.3. All use of social media must comply with the University's policies, including:

- Data Protection Policy
- Code of Practice for users of the University Computing Facilities
- Electronic Mail Usage Policy
- Code of Research Conduct and Research Ethics
- Information Security Policy
- Dignity at Nottingham Policy
- Disciplinary Procedure for Staff

6.4. In some circumstances social media may be used for the purposes of recruitment and can be useful in providing networks and recommendations from trusted sources. However when recruiting through such channels, staff should be mindful that searches on social media might lead to concerns on the part of applicants that their protected characteristics (age, disability, gender reassignment, race, religion, sex, sexual orientation, marriage/civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity) may have played a part in a recruitment decision.

6.5 All recruitment should also be undertaken in line with the University's Recruitment Policies.

6.6 Staff must not provide formal references on behalf of the University for other individuals on social media and/or professional networking websites, as such references, whether positive or negative, may be attributed to the University and may create legal liability for both the author and the University.

6.7   Social media content must not refer to, or include, information that is in conflict with the University's interests, is in any way inconsistent with an individual's contractual duties to the University or is in pursuance of unauthorised commercial activities.

6.8   The following non-exhaustive list may, according to the circumstances (and subject to 3.1), be considered to be of an unacceptable nature and should never be posted:

- any confidential information about the University and its associated entities, including subsidiary companies;
- any commercially confidential information (which may include research not yet in the public domain, indications of forthcoming developments or funding bids, data or software code, information about colleagues or personnel matters, details of unresolved grievances, non-public or not yet approved documents, minutes, news or information);
- business strategy, intellectual property or plans for innovation;
- trade secrets;
- details of legal proceedings/potential legal proceedings involving the University;
- personal information about another individual, including contact information, without their express permission;
- comments posted using fake accounts or using another person's name without their consent;
- promotion of a commercial product;
- material, including images, that is threatening, harassing, discriminatory, illegal, obscene, indecent, defamatory, or hostile towards any individual or entity;
- any other posting that constitutes a criminal offence;
- anything which may bring the University into disrepute or compromise the safety or reputation of colleagues, former colleagues, students and those connected with the University.

6.9   The University has well-established ways for staff to raise any dissatisfaction or concerns that they may have, including the Grievance Procedure or the Dignity at Nottingham Policy. Concerns must be raised through such procedures, not on social media.

7.   **Cyber Bullying via social media sites**

7.1   The University will not accept any form of bullying or harassment of or by members of University staff or students.

7.2   The following examples illustrate the types of behaviour, displayed through social media communications, which the University considers to be forms of cyber bullying:

- maliciously spreading rumours, lies or gossip
- intimidating or aggressive behaviour
- offensive or threatening comments or content
- posting comments/photos etc. deliberately mocking an individual with the intent to harass or humiliate them

7.3   Cyber bullying may also take place via other means of electronic communication such as email, text or instant messaging.

7.4   Any employee who is experiencing cyber bullying by another member of University staff or a student, will have the full support of the University. The Dignity at Nottingham Policy outlines the procedure to be followed, if a staff member feels they are being bullied, harassed or victimised.

8.   **Intellectual Property**

8.1   All staff must ensure that they have permission to share any third party materials, including 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 credited appropriately.

8.2   In addition, all staff must check the terms and conditions of a social media account and/or website before uploading material to it; by posting material to social media accounts and/or websites, you may be releasing ownership rights and control of the content. For this reason, you must exercise caution in sharing all information.

8.3   The University is not responsible for, nor does it hold any ownership, of any content posted by its staff, other than content posted by staff using University accounts, or in the course of their duties, as a form of professional communication.

9.   **Brand**

9.1   The University's name, identity and logo may only be used in accordance with the University's brand guidelines.

10.   **Roles and responsibilities**

10.1   All staff are responsible for:

- ensuring that any use of social media is carried out in line with this and other relevant policies;
- attending appropriate training;
- informing the relevant staff member(s) when an institutional account is to be used;
- seeking relevant authorisation for official posts prior to publication;
- regularly monitoring, updating and managing content he/she has posted;
- adding an appropriate disclaimer to personal accounts when the institution is named (see section 2.6 above); and
- reporting any incidents or concerns in line with section 13 below.

10.2   All line managers and tutors are responsible for:

- addressing any concerns and/or questions arising out of the use of social media including those regarding posts or comments;
- reporting and escalating matters as appropriate;
- authorising posts where designated; and
- attending additional relevant training.

11.   **Monitoring**

11.1   The University reserves the right to monitor, intercept and review within the law, without further notice, staff activities using its IT resources and communications systems, including but not limited to social media postings, to ensure that its rules are being complied with and such activities are for legitimate purposes.

11.2   The use of social media may be monitored by the University in accordance with its Information Security Policy and the Code of Practice for Users of the University Computing Facilities. Where excessive use of social media is suspected, the University may take further action.

12.   **Data Protection Act 1998 and Freedom of Information Act 2000**

12.1   The Data Protection Act 1998 ("DPA") applies to social media as it does in other contexts. You must ensure that all posts comply with the DPA and the University's Data Protection Policy.

12.2 No personal information, including photographs and videos, should be shared on social media without the consent of the individual to whom it relates. Staff should, therefore, never post other staff and/or student's and/or a third party's personal information without their consent.

12.3 The Freedom of Information Act 2000 may apply to posts and content that you have 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 (or other public authority); the content that you have posted may be disclosed.

13.   Incidents and response

13.1 Where a breach of this policy is reported, the University will review the circumstances and decide on the most appropriate and proportionate course of action, which may include referring the matter to be dealt with under a different procedure.

13.2 Where staff are in receipt of any content considered to be in breach of this policy, this should be reported to the University via their supervisor/manager.

13.3 Where staff wish to make a complaint under the Dignity at Nottingham Policy, they should contact the relevant Dignity Adviser listed on the Dignity Advisers within the Nottingham Network (DANN) contact list.

13.4 If staff wish to raise a complaint related to this policy under the Grievance Procedure, they should inform their immediate supervisor/manager.

13.5 Where reputational damage to the University is suspected due to a breach of this policy, staff members should inform their supervisor/manager who may escalate this to an appropriate senior manager.

14.   Consequences of a breach of this policy

14.1 Any breach of this policy may result in disciplinary action up to and including dismissal

14.2 Any disciplinary action will be taken in accordance with The Disciplinary Procedure for Staff.

14.3 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.

14.5 Where conduct may be a criminal offence, the University may report the matter to the police. Beyond that, any member of staff, student or third party may pursue legal action against you, if they choose to do so.

15.   Reporting

15.1 Any complaints received under this policy will be reported, on an anonymised basis where appropriate, to the relevant body within the University.