# Social Media Guidance – Think Before You Write

## 1. Scope

This document is applicable to students' use of social media and does not apply to staff of the University.

Staff are directed to the University's Social Media Policy.

## 2. Introduction

The University recognises that social media sites such as Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Instagram and many more (including internet postings and blogs), are a prevalent part of everyday life.

These sites provide an opportunity to communicate in both personal and professional lives.

Whilst the University recognises the entitlement of students to freedom of speech within the law, we are mindful of the potential risks and dangers associated with social media.

It is the responsibility of all students to ensure that their behaviour and language used on social media is appropriate and responsible.

Any complaint regarding the University or its staff should be made via the complaints procedure on the website rather than via social media.

Students are advised to familiarise themselves with the guidance below.

## 3. Guidance

3.1 Think about your personal safety before posting. Don't reveal information about yourself that could result in identity theft. This includes data such as your date of birth or address.

3.2 Never give out any passwords or login information that could compromise your account.

3.3 Remember that whether you post on a blog, Twitter or your personal Facebook page, or actively participate in any form of social media, your post has the potential of being read by millions of people.

Posts can be dragged up years after publication, even after you think you have deleted them.

3.4     Ensure your tone is right and strike the right balance between informality and formality. Do not say anything online that you would not say in public.

3.5     Social media is not anonymous. As with everything on the internet, data can be retrieved and traced back to the original author. You should therefore be very careful in relation to any communication made on a social media, as you will be personally responsible for your communications.

3.6     You should be mindful of others' privacy and be careful not to share any information that could damage their reputation and as a consequence, the reputation of the University and the value of your degree.

3.7     Be aware that postings on social media may also reflect the University and students should be particularly careful not to damage its reputation and as a consequence, the value of your degree.

3.8     You should not express any view or opinion on behalf of the University, unless expressly authorised to do so by the Communications Team at the Directorate for Institutional Advancement.

3.9     The following are examples of content that is considered to be of an unacceptable nature and should never be posted:

- inappropriate or discriminatory comments regarding the University - comments should be expressed in a polite and well-mannered way that will not harm the reputation of the University;
- material that could be deemed to be threatening, harassing, discriminatory, illegal, obscene, defamatory, libellous or hostile towards any individual (including any other student or member of staff), group or entity (including the University and its associated entities including subsidiary companies);
- sexist, racist, or homophobic/transphobic views;
- illegal/proscribed activities or organisations;
- content that infringes or violates someone else's rights;
- content of a violent extremist or terrorist nature or which incites people to commit acts of terrorism or violent extremism;
- content that could create a security risk for the University, its staff or students;
- any confidential information about the University and its associated entities including subsidiary companies;

- any commercially confidential information including that about or belonging to the University or its associated entities including subsidiary companies;
- business strategy, intellectual property or plans for innovation, including that about or belonging to the University or its associated entities including subsidiary companies;
- trade secrets including those belonging to the University or its associated entities including subsidiary companies;
- details of complaints;
- misleading or incorrect information;
- the work of someone else without obtaining that person's permission;
- personal information about another individual, including contact information, without that person's express permission;
- spam;
- comments using fake accounts or using another person's name, and
- anything which may bring the University or its associated entities including subsidiary companies into disrepute.

## 4. Misconduct

4.1 Students whose use of social media is suspected by the University of constituting misconduct or a breach of a University policy may be subject to investigation or other action (including disciplinary action) by the University under relevant procedures.

4.2 Any student who is suspected of misconduct or a breach of a University policy will be required to co-operate with any investigation operated by the student services department under that policy, including providing passwords or login details to your account.

4.3 The University may require you to remove any social media content that the University considers to constitute misconduct or a breach of a University policy. Failure to comply with such a request may in itself result in other action (including disciplinary action) by the University under relevant procedures.

4.4 Where the University is concerned that any conduct or communication could amount to an illegal activity, the University may report the matter to the police.

## 5. Reporting an Incident

5.1 Where misconduct or a breach of a University policy is reported, the University will review the circumstances (to include but not limited to how quickly the communication was taken down following a request being made to take the communication down) and decide on the most appropriate course of action.

5.2 If a student wishes to report an incident which has occurred on social media relating to staff, students or the University, they should refer to the complaints procedure which can be accessed on the University website.

5.3 If a comment by a student is brought to the attention of a member of staff they should report it to student services department.


## 6. Related Policies and Procedures

6.1 Social media should never be used in a way that breaches any of the University's policies, including but not limited to the following policies:

- Student Conduct and Discipline Policy
- Data Protection Policy;
- Freedom of Information Policy;
- Intellectual Property Policy;
- Acceptable Use Policy;
- Information Security Policy;
- Complaints Procedure
- Student Disciplinary Procedure.

To contact the Communications Team at the Directorate for Institutional Advancement please email news@bolton.ac.uk